

O. N. E.

ORTHODOX NEW ENGLAND

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Diocesan Grant for Outreach

Right: Fr. James and several volunteers from All Saints Hartford, ready to serve Thanksgiving dinner.

Rev. James Parnell

For over a year, All Saints Orthodox Church has been partnering with the Chrysalis Center in Hartford. Chrysalis strives to help those living in poverty who struggle with mental illness, substance abuse, HIV/AIDS, release from incarceration and homelessness. They've helped countless men, women, and children to "Transform their lives: Get Help... Get Better...and Give Back," as expressed in their mission statement.

In the Fall of 2015, All Saints began working with this non-profit and nearby neighbor. All Saints was given the opportunity to collaborate in

service to their veterans' transitional home (Cosgrove Commons).

After a meeting later that month with the residents and about a half-dozen parishioners, we made a plan for events for the holiday season: Thanksgiving Dinner, Christmas Crafts, a regular Game Night (Bingo), Pysanky Classes, a "Feed the Homeless" project run by them, and more.

After building some rapport by bringing dozens of "to-go" plates, and forming a core group of about 10 parishioners who supported the project, we set to work making these events a reality. The Thanksgiving Dinner, served buffet style in the

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common room at Cosgrove Commons was a great hit! As we served the dozens of veterans and their families, we came to know their names and faces. After everyone was served, we got to sit down and learn more about them and their struggles. Not all were veterans, but many had been victims of violence; for some this was their last place to turn. Young and old, black and white, male and female, Christian & atheist, Muslim and “spiritual, but not religious,” veteran and civilian, we sat and gave thanks, some to God, but all for each other.

We have come back again and again, and built stronger relationships. They've gotten the chance to grow together as a community through our events, as well as get to build bridges with us. We shared a BBQ and a time of prayer and silent remembrance on Memorial Day as all of us got to remember friends and family who died in service to our country. Numerous people from Cosgrove Commons have visited our parish, called seeking guidance, asked for prayer, cried with us about problems they're facing, laughed with us, and come to learn the love of Christ through us.

Our parishioners have come to better know all the reasons they have to be thankful; many have seen what joy a bottle of detergent or shampoo can bring for one in poverty; others have realized their misconceptions about

poverty, homelessness, and mental illness. A few were reminded of those who helped them when in need.

The work Christ has done through us—and in us—is nothing less than miraculous. We get to not only serve Christ in Hartford, but to serve Hartford in Christ.

Perhaps the most powerful event was an outreach event, which the residents themselves requested. They asked about trying to give back to the community, so we invited them to help us make bagged lunches for another local charity with which we've partnered, “Loaves and Fishes,” by supplementing their soup kitchen with lunches. A number of the residents at Cosgrove Commons found themselves touched and empowered, noting that they had once received such lunches when they were homeless. This was a powerful example of how our Orthodox parishes can make a difference without much time or money: a bag of groceries and a few minutes around a table can change lives—just like Christ feeding the 5,000.

With an offering that wasn't even enough to feed Himself and the 12 apostles, our Lord was able to feed thousands and thousands of hungry men, women, and children! Christ can, and will, multiply our offerings in amazing ways. All we have to do is offer them: ***our time, talents, and treasures!*** **ONE +**

Below: Volunteers from All Saints serve Thanksgiving dinner at the Cosgrove Commons veteran's home.



Reflections on 2016 Assembly

Anne Wilkinson

In October I was honored to be the lay delegate representing Christ the Savior Church in Southbury, Connecticut at the 53rd Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of New England. Seeing some of the “inner workings” of the diocese was interesting, and is something everyone should try to do at least once. It was wonderful to see and catch up with clergy friends throughout the diocese that I rarely see, and to be reminded that in New England we are blessed with a supportive and pastoral Archbishop and enthusiastic, caring, and faithful clergy.

As a part of the assembly packet there was a chart with the diocesan census numbers showing how many adults make up each of the parishes in our diocese. I was struck by two things: first, that our diocese is made up of only 1,679 adults; second, that only seven of the 27 of the churches in our diocese have seen any growth over the eight years covered by this chart—the remaining 20 have seen their memberships decline. I found those numbers surprising, and they were a wake-up call to me that we all need to do more to ensure the future of our Church.

Outside of the normal assembly business—approving budgets, reports from various deaneries and departments, electing new diocesan officials, and so on—there was a presentation given by Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff about Orthodox Natural Church

Development (ONCD) that I found exciting and particularly timely, especially after seeing the diocesan census.

Fr. Ivanoff's presentation on church development stressed that churches need to focus on their health, not growth. That we should be asking, “What are we doing that is preventing God from growing our church?” not, “What can I do to get the church to grow?” While we have a role to play, ultimately conversion and growth come from God. ONCD is a process that parishes can (and should, in my opinion) go through with a coach to help them identify and target areas for improvement allowing the church to become more healthy and to thereby grow. Fr. Ivanoff's presentation was excellent and empowering, and I would encourage everyone to spend time on the ONCD website: <http://oncd.us/> to learn more about ONCD.

I left the assembly reminded of the last verses in the Gospel of Matthew: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20) Ensuring that our churches are healthy and can therefore grow feels (to me, at least) a bit overwhelming, but it is what we are called to do.

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2017 Parish Grant Program Open

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek

The 2017 Diocesan “Parish Grant Guidelines” and “Grant Application” are available on the Diocesan website at www.dneoca.org. Parishes in the New England Diocese can apply for financial grants to help support outreach and

charity programs in their communities. The diocese has again budgeted up to \$10,000 in 2017 for grant monies to support parishes in these efforts. Applications will be reviewed as received. Check the website for details.

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Three Saints, Ansonia, Conn.



Right: Scenes from Vacation Church School at Three Saints Park.

Nina Kosowsky

Three Saints Orthodox Church has had a very busy few months. Vacation Church School was held from July 11-15, 2016. This was the sixth year for VCS and our largest number of participants: 56 children representing eight orthodox churches as well as non-orthodox. Each day began and ended with a prayer service which included children doing the readings and singing responses. Learning to sing church music was part of each day, The theme for this year was "Miracles of Christ". Each day a discussion was held on a miracle performed by Christ with a craft activity related to the topic. For the daily Bible reading, the children were divided into two groups based on age. Fr. Patrick Burns spoke with the children ages 9-15 yrs, and an adult volunteer spoke with the younger children.

Throughout the day, snacks were provided. Three Saints Park has facilities for a variety of

games, so again the children were divided into two groups for age appropriate games. Swimming in the pond always is a favorite activity for most of the children. For the younger ones who don't feel comfortable in the pond, a small swimming pool was provided. This year there were two lifeguards on duty along with adult supervision. The

week culminated with Vespers, with the children singing the responses, and a Family Meal. Certificates of participation were awarded. Mark your calendars for July 10-14, 2017. The goal of VCS is to provide religious education in an atmosphere that fosters fellowship and friendship.

On Aug. 28, Three Saints held its fifteenth annual picnic with our neighbor, St. Peter & St. Paul Ukrainian Catholic Church. Again, Three Saints Park was the ideal venue for the picnic attended by over 100 parishioners





Above: Participants in Vacation Church School.

Below: Members of Three Saints' Sunday School

sharing in good food and great fellowship.

Sept. 24 brought ideal weather for our annual Tag Sale. Outside, on the church grounds, furniture and accessories were available. The church auditorium was filled with an assortment of household and decorative items. Items not sold were donated to the local Big Brothers & Big Sisters organization. The following Sunday, Walter Griffin became Orthodox with a chrismation service. May God grant him many years. On the same Sunday, prayers were offered for the beginning of the Sunday School year.

The annual Welcome Home Breakfast was held on Oct. 16. Invitations were extended to parishioners who hadn't attended church for quite some time. Breakfast was served at coffee hour following Divine Liturgy.

Our most recent fundraiser was the Slavic Festival held Nov. 4-5. Traditional ethnic foods and Russian zakuski were offered along with

baked goods, tag sale items, baskets to be raffled, and crafts. This year brought great participation from the community on both days.

For the second year our Sunday School children had assumed the responsibility of collecting food and monetary donations for our Thanksgiving food baskets. They did a great job.

Dec. 10 was the last fundraiser for the year – our Annual Cookie Walk. A wide variety of cookies was available and sold by the pound.

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Turkey Cards to Patients: Christ the Savior, Southbury, Conn.

Anne Wilkinson

On Sunday, November 20, the “Live Wires” children and teens at Christ the Savior Church gathered to make Thanksgiving cards for patients at Yale-New Haven Hospital. During a brief lesson about Matthew 25:31-46 (the Last Judgment Gospel reading), the children discussed Jesus’ words, “I was sick and you visited me” and that while it wasn’t possible for the children to visit patients on Thanksgiving, making get well cards was another way for us to care for the sick.

Feathers, bodies, beaks, and other pieces had all been cut out in advance, and the children were encouraged to be creative and make colorful turkeys. On the inside of each card was the message: “Healing thoughts and good wishes are being sent your way. Happy Thanksgiving!” and

each card was signed by the child who created it. The group made nearly 40 turkey cards, each of them unique and cheerful.

I regularly volunteer at Yale-New Haven on Thursday mornings, and delivered the cards to patients on Thanksgiving morning. The patients were thrilled to receive the cards, and most asked that their thanks be sent back to the Live Wires group. The hospital staff was also appreciative that our church had sent such fun and colorful cards to their patients. It was a joy to bring the creativity, enthusiasm, and good wishes of our church’s children to patients on Thanksgiving and we hope to be able to do so again next year.

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Below: Anne Wilkinson and the Live Wires pose with their Thanksgiving cards.



Women's Retreat at New Skete Monastery

Matushka Reba Korban

On the last weekend of October 2016, 8 women from St. Jacob of Alaska Mission in Northfield Falls, Vermont, along with 2 more women from the region, drove to New Skete Monastery in Cambridge, NY to attend a retreat on "Prayer of the Heart".

The retreat began with Vespers on Friday evening and culminated with a tour of the Nun's Monastery and Bakery following Divine Liturgy and a festive meal on Sunday. Accommodations were quite comfortable at Emmaus House, the monastery Guest House, with private bedrooms, each including a sitting room and bath, as well as a common living room and kitchen. Delicious homemade meals were provided in the Monk's dining room.

After Vespers and supper, we met with Sr. Rebecca to discuss the retreat schedule and introduce ourselves. Sr. Rebecca suggested that Saturday be spent in silence. She explained how silence is endangered in our culture, yet very essential if we are to "listen to God."

Saturday began with Matins, followed by breakfast, which was eaten in silence. The first session began with a welcome by Br. Christopher and then an introduction to Meditation Practice with Sr. Rebecca. Sr. Rebecca talked about how difficult it is to "listen to our inner voice" in a culture that is often over-stimulating and cries out for our attention, especially when it comes to using computers. She spoke about how easy it is to be taken "off-course" by so many options that it can leave us "off-

balance". We need to listen to our "inner voice" that tells us: "don't go there" and "stay on track"...and practicing silent prayer and meditation can help us do that, she said. We were also given practical tools for how to enter into silent prayer & meditation, such as how to deal with thoughts and distractions and how not to judge ourselves by how we think our experience should go. She reminded us of St. Silouan's words, "Keep your mind in hope, light and love, and do not despair." She then guided us through periods of silent meditation with time in between for questions and comments.

Br. Christopher led the afternoon session on "Lectio Divina" (or Sacred Reading). This was new to most of us and Br. Christopher explained that Lectio (pronounced Lexio) Divina is a way of reading scripture by "listening with the ear of our heart". To do this, scripture is read slowly so that it has time to sink in, allowing us to pay closer attention to each word, thus providing the opportunity for a particular phrase or word to touch us more deeply and giving us time to meditate on that phrase or word. The purpose of Lectio Divina is to deepen our connection to God, and through it, God addresses each of us personally, Br. Christopher said.

After a short break we gathered again to

Below: Children at **St. Mark's Annual Harvest Festival** in Oct., 2016.





Above: Fr. James Robinson of St. Mark's, Kingston, Mass., celebrated ten years of service to the parish on Nov. 6, 2016!

Below: A scene of St. Mark's Annual Harvest Festival in Oct., 2016.

practice group *Lectio Divina* on the Gospel reading for Sunday's Divine Liturgy. The Gospel reading was slowly read out loud, followed by a few moments of silence and then each person offered a phrase from the reading that stood out or had special meaning for us. Then another translation was read and we did the same thing, except this time we all shared a single word that held special meaning for us.

It was soon time for the Vigil service and then supper, which ended our day of silence. After supper we had a special presentation from Patricia Bouteneff, who had also attended the retreat. Pat had recently written an article on "The Women's Role in the Orthodox Church" and we welcomed the opportunity to hear about her research.

We learned about the many ways in which women served and continue to serve in the Church today. It was an interesting presentation and a

lively discussion followed.

Our retreat concluded on Sunday, which began with Matins and Divine Liturgy. Since it was the Feast of Our Lady of the Sign, which is the Nun's Monastery Feast Day, there was an elaborate coffee hour afterwards. Then after a short wrap-up session, we headed down the road to the Nun's Monastery for a tour of their Monastery and cheesecake bakery. All too soon, the time came to say goodbye.

During the course of the retreat, we also had time for individual council and confession. The retreat had been both informational and practical.

As we shared our experiences with one another on our trip back to Vermont, we all agreed that it had been a very special and deeply meaningful time. We left feeling uplifted and encouraged. We also felt that our shared experience had deepened our relationships with one another and we felt blessed to have New Skete Monastery close enough to make having a retreat there an annual event and part of our parish life.

To schedule a retreat for your parish, visit their website:

www.newskete.org

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SS. Peter & Paul, Meriden, Conn.

Rev. Joshua Mosher

The community of SS. Peter & Paul rejoiced in a number of encouraging events in the last few months.

In October, we honored the 60th anniversary of the consecration of SS. Peter & Paul's new temple. Many joined us for worship and fellowship that day, where we enjoyed a luncheon, honored our seniors, perused archival material from our history, and watched a slide show of the "First Hundred Years" of our parish. Old friends delighted in the memories, while new ones got a taste of our parish stories.

We held a Thanksgiving dinner before the Nativity Fast, which also drew in a crowd of friends. And as we prepared for Thanksgiving Day, we also organized our annual Thanksgiving deliveries to ten neighborhood families in need. We used donations to our Charity Fund to purchase fixings and pantry items. On Nov. 20, parishioners assembled and distributed large bags full of supplies to nearby homes.

In recent years, our parish has adopted a new tradition for the Entry of the



Above: Members of SS. Peter & Paul deliver food to one of ten homes before Thanksgiving.

Below: Scenes from the Theotokos Tea Party.

Theotokos. Girls are invited to wear their festive best and escort the festal icon into the church, bearing candles and icons. After the service, we went downstairs to find the hall decorated for a Theotokos Tea Party, with the girls as the guests of honor at a special table.

We also celebrated the restoration of the iconostasis and right side of the church by year's end. The left side is the project for 2017. The painting had been soiled and damaged over the decades, but the restoration makes the church more beautiful than ever.

Heartfelt thanks to the many devoted people who made all these celebrations possible.

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Baptism at St. Nicholas:

Father Joseph Gall of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Pittsfield, Mass., baptized his own son on Saturday, Nov. 5. Father Joseph and Matushka Mary welcomed **John Tristan Gall** into the world on Sept. 25. The baptismal liturgy included a Coptic Christian hymn since Matushka Mary is of Coptic ancestry. Her father is a Coptic priest in New Jersey. Her sister and her brother-in-law, who also is a Coptic priest, are the godparents. Father Joseph himself was ordained at St. Nicholas last February.



GIVING ABOVE AND BEYOND

March is ONE Stewards Month

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek

The Diocese again exceeded the ONE Stewards budget level of \$22,000 in donations during 2016. His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon, and the Diocesan Council are very appreciative to all of you throughout the Diocese who support ONE Stewards each year.

The “Bishop’s Circle” of donors (\$500 or more) again increased by a couple new members in 2016. This select group of donors truly set an outstanding example of “Giving Above and Beyond” for the Diocesan activities supported by ONE Stewards.

Show your support of our diocesan Youth, our diocesan Seminarians, our diocesan Missions, and our diocesan Charity donations during 2017 by supporting ONE Stewards. You should be receiving your ONE Stewards appeal envelope in late February. Remember, March is ONE Stewards month. Let's all join Archbishop Nikon in supporting ONE Stewards in 2017.

ONE Stewards
PO Box 1182
Torrington, CT 06790

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Seen at the Connecticut Youth Retreat

Responding to popular demand from Youth Rally kids, Fr. John Hopko and Fr. James Parnell, and M. Jenny Mosher organized CT Youth Retreats in 2016.

Fr. James shared: “Great participation in our second CT Youth Retreat...even more than the first! Food, fun, fellowship with youth from numerous parishes and jurisdictions. We discussed

the importance of the Nativity Fast and the many parallels between Nativity and Pascha. Each of us, as part of our Advent preparations, exchanged prayer requests with another person and committed to praying for them daily during the 40 days.”

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Upcoming Events

March 15	Deadline for the next issue of the ONE
March 5	Sunday of Orthodoxy: Christ the Savior, Southbury; and Holy Ghost, Bridgeport
March 12	Mission Vespers at St. Alexis, Clinton
March 19	FORCC Vespers at St. Nicholas Antiochian Church, Bridgeport
March 26	Mission Vespers at SS. Peter & Paul, Meriden
April 2	Holy Unction Service at Three Saints, Ansonia
April 9	Bridegroom Matins at All Saints, Hartford
July 10-14	Vacation Church School, Three Saints, Ansonia
August 7-12	Diocesan Youth Rally