

Kansas City Deanery
Report to the Diocesan Assembly
October 5-7, 2009
Fr. Timothy Sawchak, Dean

Deanery News

- Fr. Tim visited St. Raphael Mission in Quincy, IL the weekend of February 21-22.
- Fr. Tim served the Divine Liturgy in Springfield, MO with Fr. Andrew Moore on July 5.
- Fr. Tim will be at Presentation Monastery in Marshfield, MO on September 19th for their founders day.
- Fr. Tim attended the funeral of Fr. Joseph Hirsch in Denver, CO on August 31. Fr. Joseph was the founder of St. Theodore of Tarsus Church in Kansas City, MO.
- Fr. Tim will be at Archangel Michael Church in St. Louis, MO on November 1 for their 100th Anniversary.

St. Raphael Mission—Quincy, IL

Priest Thaddeus Nielsen

In the past year we received four persons by Holy Baptism and Chrismation and one by Confession. At this writing we count 25 adult and ten child communicants in 17 households. On any given Sunday there will be 24 adults and children at Divine Liturgy and 7 at Saturday evening Great Vespers. We are losing two families who are moving away because of job changes.

In addition to submitting its OCA and Diocesan assessments each month, this mission parish has generously supported all three OCA seminaries; the Presentation of the Virgin Mary Orthodox Monastery at Marshfield, Missouri; the Hogar Rafael Ayau Orthodox Orphanage in Guatemala; the daughter of one of our members who is battling cancer; the local Salvation Army food pantry; Warm The Children (an Orthodox group which sends clothing and supplies to orphanages in Eastern European countries); and Quanada, a local women's shelter. This mission parish added the volunteer position of Financial Secretary, which is responsible for receiving, counting, recording and depositing incomes. We also began a building fund drive (we presently rent space in a downtown storefront).

With the generous assistance of a parish health grant, we ran a series of radio spots on a local Christian radio station, using two different kinds of spots; we have not yet noticed any fruit of that effort.

We had our first high school youth group meetings this year (we finally have enough youth to constitute a group). We restarted a Sunday School class for younger children after a hiatus of a couple of years and expect this to continue in the coming year.

The women's group collects and delivers food to a local woman's shelter; in the coming year they intend to meet monthly for a book study, create a blog for fasting recipes, and find ways to interact with the greater Quincy community.

We added the Bridegroom Matins to our Holy Week schedule this past year. The Archpriest Timothy Sawchak, The Dean of our Kansas City Deanery, paid us a get-acquainted visit for a weekend in February. We look for an every-three-year archpastoral visit from Archbishop JOB.

We ask your prayers and invite you to visit us when you are in the area.

Theotokos “Unexpected Joy” Mission--Ash Grove, MO

Priest Moses Berry

Theotokos “Unexpected Joy” Mission has been blessed with a peaceful and fruitful year. We

now average between 25 and 35 people at Sunday Divine Liturgy and 10 at weekday liturgies. Attendance is up at evening services as well. Parishioners come from all over the region, some driving two hours to get here for services.

In June we celebrated our 2nd annual Heritage Music Festival, and raised over \$500.00 for the Ozarks Afro American Heritage Museum. Almost every member contributed to this effort, through contributions of time, money, and labor. We all felt it was a great success, and, of course, a learning experience, as we hope to expand on the Festival in future years. Our primary purpose is to welcome people to the church and provide a friendly exposure to Orthodoxy through fellowship, food, tours of the temple, and family-focused activities.

Since January, there have been two adult baptisms and one child. We anticipate another person becoming a catechumen within a few weeks. Membership has also increased through transfer – one family from Springfield, and one from Arkansas.

We were recently given a beautiful icon of St. Seraphim so the temple continues to increase in beauty as we grow.

St. John of Kronstadt Church--Lincoln, NE

Priest James Dank

Deacon Edwin Aasen

Attendance: Great Vespers - The average attendance at Great vespers is around twenty. Matins on Sunday morning is well attended. Our average attendance on Sunday Liturgy is seventy to eighty. There is a core group of parishioners who attend on Sunday, around fifty, but each week it varies with those who live out of town.

Other Services held: We have some kind of service every day. Vespers on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Tuesday and Thursday we have Matins. A small group of young men meet every day at seven AM for morning prayers.

Visitors: We have a steady stream of visitors at St. John's. All are greeted by our greeter also by me before the liturgy begins. All receive a call from me and few a note.

Growth Goals: Every day I spend time at the altar praying for each member and their intensions, for all new contacts and for all who have been with us and shall be with us. I believe each person who comes through our doors God has sent to us, not only for the salvation of their souls but for the salvation of our souls as well. Our parish has sixty families, and over one hundred and fifty souls. Our goals at this point are to find a new church building or land that we may build.

Outreach: Our men's group, the Father Arseny Society, is open to men of other denominations that are seeking to deepen their life in Christ. We have seven or eight men from other churches are all very interested in Orthodoxy.

Our bookstore coffeehouse is still a main outreach for our church. We also had a very successful series of Lenten lectures. At every lecture it was standing room only. Every Wednesday we have a book study attended by the ladies in the church.

We have a food net program every Saturday. We feed one hundred to one hundred twenty family's each week. It is staffed by members of the parish and the Fr. Arseny Society. Food net is a program where we collect food from several stores that are going to throw away, sort it and give it to needy family's. It has turned into a great ministry for our church.

Archangel's Michael and Gabriel Mission: The Mission is going well. Fr. Stephen Walenski, a retired Antiochian priest, is serving there on Sundays under my direction. He has done a

marvelous job with them. I get up to visit as much as I can, and also attend their parish council meetings. Please pray for their success. We are still looking for a permanent priest to take the mission.

We have four new young families attending who wish to become Orthodox.

The average age our parish has dropped from late forties to early thirties in the last year.

Holy Trinity Church--Overland Park, KS

Archpriest Timothy Sawchak

Priest Christopher Rowe

Priest Michael Medis

Deacon Stephen Beasley

Deacon David Neff

- Fr. Christopher Rowe continues at the President of the Kansas City Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood.
- Fr. Michael Medis serves the OCA Bulgarian Mission of St. Sophia in Lawrence, KS the 2nd and 4th Sundays of a month.
- Mother Gabriella, abbess of Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction, led a retreat on November 22, 2008 at the parish.
- Brent Beasley was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on December 6 by His Eminence Archbishop Job.
- David Neff was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on December 7 by His Eminence Archbishop Job.
- A group of 7 went on retreat to Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction, MI June 23-27.
- Church School will begin on September 13 with over 70 children.
- Icons of the Descent into Hades and the Nativity will be installed in the church prior to the Diocesan Assembly.
- Since the last Assembly there have been 6 Chrismations and 4 baptisms.
- Fr. Paul O'Callahan, Dean of St. George Antiochian Cathedral in Wichita will lead a retreat on November 21.
- Work continues on preparing for our Ethnic Food and Pastry Sale the weekend of October 23-24.

Archangel Michael Church--St. Louis, MO

Priest Christopher Phillips

In this year, 2009 we rejoice in the celebration of the Centennial anniversary of the founding of St. Michaels parish. Our centennial celebration is scheduled for the weekend of Saturday, October 31st with Great Vespers and a reception to follow. Sunday, November 1st we are celebrating Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with Archbishop Job as our celebrant followed by a festal meal in the parish hall with a program to follow where our parish family young and old can share our memories of St. Michael. We welcome our larger diocesan family to join us in this celebration.

St. Michaels annual Russian Food Fest will be celebrated on Saturday October 3rd and Sunday October 4th. This event has become a revenue generating outreach event that not only brings in money to the parish; it exposes the larger community to the fullness of Orthodox faith.

In this past year, there has been one chrismation, one funeral, and no transfers of membership. The membership census of your church has remained largely unchanged.

Great Vespers is celebrated every Saturday evening. On Sunday morning we have been singing the Matins Canon and Lauds followed by Holy Divine Liturgy, except on the third Sunday of the month when Fr. Christopher serves Divine Liturgy at our sister parish, The Nativity of the Virgin Mary in Desloge, Missouri. On those Sundays we have a Reader Service, The Third and Sixth Hour followed by the Typica. On the third Sunday of the month we have been having adult Christian Education. We hope to develop a curriculum that will help parishioners develop a deeper understanding of their Orthodox faith.

There have been several capital improvements to church properties. The church rectory has been renovated and has been placed on the rental market. Given the downturn in the real-estate market we have had difficulty selling the property. The former Christ the Good Shepherd property is rented and brings money into the parish. We have contracted with a real-estate management agency to manage the property for us. This means the parish council is no longer burdened with being in the land lord business. There have been several fixer up projects going on at church. We have cleaned a lot of clutter out of the parish hall; we have cleaned the chandelier in the church. A lot more work still needs to be done.

St. Thomas Church--Springfield, MO

Priest Andrew Moore

Icon kissin'
Incense Swingin'
Candle lightin'
Baby Dunkin'
Oil Smearin'
Deep knee Bowin'
Cross Signin'
Song Chantin'
Robe Wearin'
Bishop Respectin'
Saint Veneratin'
Mary Blessin'
Soul Curein'
God Unifyin'
Incarnation' participatin'
Trinity worshipin'
Heaven bound
Ozark Orthodox Christians!!

This is some of the other stuff going on.

At the end of 2008 we did an internal self-assessment in which the members of St Thomas were asked to identify the priorities for the year. From this self-study we established the several areas of work within the life of the parish needing attention.

These include funeral related matters, web-sight rebuilding, feeding the hungry, communications, Altar guild, Orthodox speakers to help inform the broader community as to our theology and practice.

Some of our work is detailed as follows:

1. We needed to offer lower cost funerals to our Orthodox Christians. The parish was given a piece of ground (approx 17 acres attached to Presentation Monastery) and we began to prepare the cemetery in late 2008. The ground was cleared of some of the trees and dense under-growth. A road was cut through the property and gates were installed. Additionally, we are working with member volunteers who are to receive training from a local funeral home director to assist in the transportation, washing and preparation of the body of an Orthodox Christian with assistance as needed from a local funeral director and in full compliance of the State of Missouri. Much of what we desired to accomplish was similar to the experience that the local funeral director has had in assisting the Amish community.
2. This arrangement allows participation as a parish in maintaining a family decorum with the departed brother or sister, from the time of one's departure through the funeral itself. By having the parish involved the departed loved one is surrounded with people familiar with them, allows us in many cases to bring the body straight away to the church and keep vigil there with our loved one. The assisting funeral home can keep the body in cold storage for as many as three days prior to the funeral.
3. We are not using embalming methods in our cemetery but have elected to go "green" so to speak. Natural funerals eliminates concerns about contamination to groundwater, and also exclude added expenses incurred with embalming such as vaults, and various funeral director expenses etc. We are providing oak caskets made by local Amish craftsmen at fraction of the price commonly paid. Our only expense being the opening of the grave i.e. backhoe expense. We have used this as a teaching opportunity that ordinarily the funeral and visitation will be done from the church. The entire cost of such a funeral for our members should remain under \$600.00 for the foreseeable future. We have also begun the effort to work with the local Catholic and public hospitals to use a portion of the cemetery to bury the unborn children lost in miscarriage.

3. Our website has been rebuilt and is offering surfers a much better access to Springfield Orthodoxy due to the great work of several in our parish and great help from Joel the Archbishop's former assistant.

Other areas that have received attention are food collection, altar guild that maintains the sacristy supplies, vestments, cleaning of the sacred vessels etc.

Due to the shortage of available money we have been unable to make a second order of the very popular prayer book offered at our clergy convocation. The Orthodox Prayer-book was sold out almost immediately. We are hoping to make a second order soon and will let everyone know when we do.

Currently the parish has 12 catechumens. We have had three weddings this year, which is new for us. These are all young people who have meet within the parish these last couple of year. I look forward to the inevitable church growth resulting from these marriages!

I had surgery in June to remove a large benign cyst from my vocal chords. This had been a problem since Pascha this year. My voice got very raspy and it became difficult to speak and

impossible to sing. I did not know if I would sing/chant a liturgy again or even continue as a priest. I did not realize how much I loved to sing the prayers of the church until I could not. I am deeply Thankful to all of you for your prayers during this difficult time. By His grace and your prayers I am fine!

Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church—Madison, IL

Archpriest Thomas Succarotte

Priest Michael Kuzara

St. James Mission--North Kansas City, MO

Fr. Gregory Dye

The Mission will now be taken care of by a team of priests: Fr. Michael Medis, Fr. Christopher Rowe, Fr. Gregory Dye and Fr. Thomas George. Each will serve a Liturgy once a month.