

**REPORT OF THE MICHIGAN DEANERY TO THE
48th DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY
OCTOBER 5-7, 2009**

The four deanery parishes in the metro Detroit area continue to participate in the local Pan-Orthodox Council of Orthodox Christian Churches, while Holy Ascension in Albion and St. Demetrius in Jackson work with other “outstate” Orthodox parishes. Common Lenten worship along with social, educational and other spiritually edifying gatherings throughout the year set the foundation for a modest collective ministry and witness.

Holy Ascension in Albion

Fr. Joshua Frigerio reports the usual weddings, baptisms, funerals and such at the parish this past year. Some physical improvements in the church basement were made to the nearly 100 year old structure. A parish seminarian was ordained to the Holy Deaconate in March. Archbishop JOB made his customary Ascension Feast day visit. There is hope that a new altar table will be consecrated next year.

Once again this year members of the parish gathered for Orthodox family camp, spending a week together in prayer and fellowship at a nearby campground. The parish was blessed to receive a \$1,000.00 parish health grant to operate an innovative MP3 player distribution outreach. If interested, a full report of the results of this project can be found at <http://www.orthodoxchurchalbion.org/mp3project.htm>.

Holy Ascension parish is fortunate to have a regular flow of visitors from two nearby Christian colleges, some of whom become catechumens. The down side of this blessing is that after several years they graduate and leave the area. Nevertheless, souls are nurtured in the Faith.

Holy Trinity in Detroit

Fr. Lev Kopistiansky reports a series of Church School activities and fundraisers for charity throughout the year - a pancake breakfast for the Christmas stocking project; hand made greeting cards for the shut ins; the Christmas Yolka with a “Bring a non Orthodox friend” theme; serving at the annual “Souper Bowl” Party; psanki craft lessons and enjoying a fellowship pool party.

The parish sisterhood and brotherhood are active throughout the year with service projects and socials. A unique newer tradition is a Memorial day weekend sing a long honoring all veterans and active participants of all branches of the armed forces. Dinners to benefit local charities, beautifying the Holy Temple and just getting work done that needs to be done keeps these groups busy.

Adult education from September to June also serves as an inquirers class. The parish choir directress, Matushka Vicki, also serves as one of the directors of the Pan-Orthodox Council’s choir during Lenten services and the Holy Dormition (O.C.A.Romanian) Monastery annual pilgrimage.

Holy Transfiguration in Livonia

HTOC has moved from a parish council model of parish administration to a Ministries Model. The Administrative Ministry consists of the Rector, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Financial Secretary. Basically, these are the officers of the Ministries Council responsible for the daily operation of the church. Other ministries include: Stewardship, Finance, Communications, Worship, Christian Education, Evangelism, Good Samaritan, Youth, Young Adult and OCF, Fellowship of Martha, Mary & Lazarus and Building and Grounds Ministry. Some ministries are working better than others; but we are still in the building and development stage.

The work of the various ministries this year is as follows: The Evangelism Ministry helped to host a church growth workshop, supported by other churches and Pascha Books, and led by Joe Kormos, Diocesan Parish Health Coordinator.

Our Wednesday evening inquirer classes are on-going. Twelve Catechumens were received into the Holy Church through Baptism and Chrismation this year. There are currently 5 catechumens receiving further instruction. Several others are attending the class and will hopefully become catechumens. Two of the individuals received into our church this year are former Protestant pastors. One has been Orthodox for several years and will probably be heading to Seminary in the future; and the other is a Catechumen with a Master of Divinity degree.

Christian Education ministry held two retreats this year for children and teens on the topic of Iconography. Vacation Bible School and visit to Dormition Monastery was held in August. Fifteen of our young adults were able to attend summer camps. Donors were sought out for any child whose family was experiencing financial problems.

The Good Samaritan Ministry members participated in two Missionary trips to Alaska and Mexico. Food and toiletry items were sent to our military personnel in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The Gleaners Foodbank received donations of food items and several families were helped during the holiday season.

Our Iconography project continues. The bottom tier of the church is almost complete. Our Iconographer painted a Fresco Icon of the Transfiguration over the church entrance doors. We thank God for this gift.

In the fall, we are going to begin farming one acre of our property with a community vegetable garden. We will be offering vegetable for sale to our parishioners and also donate vegetable outside our parish to those in need.

Our Fellowship of Martha-Mary-Lazarus was instrumental in causing our parish to go “green” this year. That doesn’t mean we support Michigan State over Michigan, it means that we are going to be more sensitive to taking care of God’s creation by recycling more, not using styrofoam products at dinners and coffee hours, etc. We now bring our own coffee cups. It seems to be working well.

St. Demetrius in Jackson

The iconographic beautification of the Temple continues. Fr. Dusan Koprivica reports that four new frescoes (Ss. Constantine and Helen, Baptism of Christ, Mystical Supper and Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple) were commissioned for the Nave. Another physical improvement was completed by the men's group who remodeled the ladies' restroom and made it handicap accessible.

The parish conducts a year round canned food drive to support a local food bank. Their year round (not just Christmas and lent) example has been picked up by other area churches, much to the joy of food bank personnel. Other charitable/outreach activities include support of St. Mark in Rochester's Project Mexico trip; donations to a priest and family for medical expenses; relay for life cancer walk and Buddy Walk for Down's Syndrome children.

The sisterhood provided the Lenten meal for the Dormition Monastery's Feast day pilgrimage. Monthly Saturday family nights after Great Vespers brings the faithful together for fellowship and makes for a great vespers attendance. A new cookbook was compiled by the sisterhood and will be available soon. Last October the 50th anniversary of the parish was celebrated.

In the last year or so nine families from the parish have suffered job losses and/or home foreclosures. Still, by God's Grace, the parish budget is intact and on target, and the community is actually exploring the possibility of building a ground level hall attached to the Temple. As Fr. Dusan concludes: "We have a positive and energetic outlook for our continued ministry in God's Kingdom."

St. Mark in Rochester Hills

In the summer of 2008 St. Mark was blessed with the receipt of one of the original diocesan parish health grants. The funding and the project itself has given a wonderful boost to working committee and the parish as a whole. The primary purpose was to train/enable our parishioners to be more helpful to the seekers who come to our door. A full report of the project was made by Joe Kormos in the Parish Pulse. The archived article can be found on the diocesan web site. Another first time project this past year was to send a team of six parish teens and two adults to Project Mexico. The whole-parish co-operation for both projects was outstanding. The Project Mexico team has submitted a follow-up proposal for a 2009 diocesan parish health grant to produce educational materials on mission for church school programs.

St. Mark continues the adornment process in the Temple. New furnishings, iconostasis and frescoes are installed and more are on the way. Archbishop JOB will consecrate the Temple (built in 2000) next summer on July 24.

Parish charitable work includes donations to the local Neighborhood House, the annual dinner served to homeless in Macomb County in co-operation with a nearby Lutheran parish, I.O.C.C. collections, Church World Services CROP Walk, semi annual Red Cross blood drives at the parish, Christmas Caroling and gift distribution at a local nursing home, monthly collections for a disabled priest and his family, and in-parish shut in care. Mission outreach includes O.C.M.C. Support a Mission Priest, February Mission collection for the diocesan mission/parish fund (

whatever it's called these days), as well as the previously mentioned Project Mexico effort.

There are currently four adult catechumens and an unbaptized toddler enrolled at the parish. The economic situation in the state, and the auto industry in particular, has affected but not devastated the community. God is Good.

Ss. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Detroit

On November 15, 2008 former pastor Archpriest Fr. Michael Simerick entered retirement from active parish ministry. Since the weekend following, the Cathedral has been serviced by visiting clergy.

Much gratitude is extended to Fr. Alexandru Partioc, a priest of the O.C.A. Romanian Diocese who is attached to the Holy Ascension Monastery in Detroit who has served the parish almost every Sunday and some Feast days since November. Since the vacancy there has only been one Sunday with a reader's service instead of a Divine Liturgy.

The parish population is small, about 60 souls. Recent renovation projects have amassed a greater than \$600,000.00 debt. A number of parishioners departed the parish at the retirement of Fr. Michael. The rectory was sold in January and has bought down the debt about \$200,000.00. Operations continue on a month to month (sometimes week to week, even day to day) basis. Economic and demographic realities in southwest Detroit are not favorable. As dean I celebrated the Patronal Feast day on June 29 and honestly admitted to them that the previous November I had no expectation that the parish would still exist on that day. Yet it does.

The faithful at the cathedral have expressed much joy in their existence. They claim that the energy and the fellowship has not been this good for years. They like to go to church and to be together. They have monthly family hosted dinners. They continue in modest ways to be charitable to others. They smile and they are at peace in their church.

Three of the members attended the recent urban parishes' summit in Cleveland. They found it interesting, informative and probably in some ways valuable. Southwest Detroit, however, remains desolate.