
INDIANAPOLIS DEANERY PARISH REPORTS

St. Stephen the First Martyr Orthodox Church

Crawfordsville, Indiana

Rev. Joel Weir (rector)

2011 has proven to be a blessed and momentous year for the community of St. Stephens. In this past year, our parish family has grown, with new children being born and baptized, two weddings, along with the reception of four new catechumens and several more inquirers who have become regular visitors to our parish, there is much to be thankful for.

The liturgical and outreach life of the parish has continued to grow throughout the past year, building upon the foundation already established. Weekday services are offered, along with a Wednesday evening “Orthodoxy 101” class that is advertised to the greater community of Crawfordsville. In the past year we have hosted concerts, guest speakers, and family fun nights in our fellowship hall.

St. Stephens was also blessed to receive a Parish Development Grant from the Diocese of the Midwest for our Youth-led Community Outreach Initiative. The goals of the Initiative are 1) to involve our vibrant youth and young adult group in the planning, development, and execution of community outreach events, and 2) to become more visible in our greater community by offering events and programs. Part of this Initiative will be the building of a “Youth Shack” to serve as both a space for the youth/young adult group to meet, and to be a central location for our outdoor outreach activities.

In addition to a lively and growing youth group and church school program, St. Stephens has also continued and increased its support and involvement with St. Johns Camp Programs. Along with having many campers and staff members from St. Stephens, this past year we organized the first annual Fun and Frolf Fest, a Disc Golf Tournament at a local park to benefit St. Johns Camp. The event was a success. Other ministries that St. Stephens supports, through donations, involvement by parishioners,

and occasional fundraising sponsorship are Achaius Ranch (www.achaiusranch.org), Hagia Sophia Classical Academy (www.hagiasophiaacademy.org) and Trinity Mission (a local substance abuse program/homeless shelter).

The Wabash College OCF continues to grow. In the past year, along with regular meetings and weekly prayer services on campus, several lectures and activities have occurred in conjunction with the Newman Center, the campus Roman Catholic student group. This has provided excellent opportunities for dialogue, education, and the building of relationships.

In the past year several members of St. Stephens were involved in mission work. A team, led by Presbytera Maria went to Project Mexico in July, and Fr. Joel and Pres. Maria joined a team that served at Hogar Rafael Ayau Orphanage in Guatemala. In other traveling news, a group from St. Stephens took part in a Spring Break Monastery Pilgrimage to Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City and St. Tikhons Monastery in South Canaan.

A shared desire to witness to Orthodox unity in our greater community has led to an increase in cooperation and a growing relationship between St. Stephens and Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church (from the Carpatho-Russian Archdiocese). In the past year, the two parishes have increasingly sought to act as “one” through regular concelebrations of weekday Feasts, as well as shared outreach and fellowship events.

Among the most blessed and momentous events of the past year, though, was certainly the Archpastoral visit and Consecration of our altar and parish by His Grace, Bishop MATTHIAS on September 17th. The event marked a fulfillment of the decades of seeking, working, and ultimately finding and living the Orthodox faith that is truly the story of St. Stephens. The event also served as an encouragement and charge to continue in our efforts to be good stewards with the gifts God has given us, in prayer, in living the Orthodox Faith, and in sharing the True Faith with those around us. During his Archpastoral visit, His Grace also installed Fr. Joel Weir as rector.

SAINT STEPHEN THE FIRST MARTYR MISSION,

Lima, Ohio

Over the past year, St Stephen the First Martyr launched a campaign to reach out to our neighborhood and get to know our neighbors personally. To do this, we mapped out our entire neighborhood, listing every house number, and, members designed and printed large attractive cards, introducing St Stephen's. We talked a great deal in sermons and at council about formulating our testimonies of Christ and of the Orthodox Church. On the designated day, nearly 3/4ths of our total adult membership gathered at the church, and role played how to approach folks in their homes. (We emphasized that we have no ulterior motive; no one is to invite folks to church, or even share when we have services; we simply want to say hello, introduce ourselves, and ask how we may be of service to individuals and/or the neighborhood. If someone asks, however, we were well prepared to share personally.) After prayer together, we went in groups of two, and found neighborhood folks very receptive. We had a follow up day to cover the houses with people not at home when we went the first time. The campaign was as much a success for members, in terms of opening them up to sharing about Christ and the Church, as it was for our positive introduction to the neighborhood. We had a second, sort-of follow up at Christmastime, by going door-to-door in the neighborhood caroling.

St. Stephen's continues to slowly grow, both spiritually and numerically, catechizing with our "Seeker's Manual" (www.lulu.com/spotlight/FrMark). Our regular Nursing Home Visitation was revived this year, with the support of care facility staff members. We have made many dear friends among those who essentially have no one to love them. (The members of St Stephen's who go to Nursing Home Visitation night always say *they* are the ones being blessed.) Our Lenten and Advent food drives for the needy have seen a marked increase in generosity, with friendly competition between the "Theotokos" side and the "Christ" side as to which can pile up the most food goods (and giving the food is a blessing for the distributor!).

We have adopted a "sister" church in Moscow (St George), and after a few exchanges we are now in the process of coordinating regular communication between the members of our communities. Our prison ministry (a letter writing campaign, led by a few of our ladies) continues to encourage incarcerated women. Father made major strides toward a monthly Saturday Spanish liturgy, but ultimately our main connection to the small hispanic community in Lima did not remain with us. St Stephen's council has

also planned outreach to several nearby cities (30-45 mins. away), cities far from any Orthodox witness at all, setting up vespers with ads and flyers in order to test interest in Orthodoxy.

In 2011 St Stephen's hosted a conference, "Orthodoxy and Islam: Crisis and Opportunity," which was well attended, and the response from attendees was very encouraging. Speakers included Fr Daniel Byantoro, Raymond Ibriham, Anthony Davar, and "Facing Islam" author Ralph Sidway. The principle speakers of the conference are working on forming an organization to inform Orthodox Christians and to reach out to Muslims, both in Indonesia and the U.S. Response was so positive that we are currently seeking His Grace's blessing for another conference in 2012, "Healing Homosexuality."

Our annual group going to the March For Life is now also joining in the 40 Days for Life Campaign. We pray at scheduled times for forty days in Lent, and again in the Fall. This is actually a very tragic development, as in the past year Lima (a very conservative community) has gotten its first abortion clinic. Accordingly, we engage our culture with peaceful prayer and sharing the truth in love.

Our men's group, modeled after St John's in Indy, is starting to take off, with enthusiasm. Our women continue their encouraging get togethers as well. Bible studies, which we had in past years but which faded away, continue to be non-existent, despite many concerted efforts and much council discussion. However, Father has begun to email the daily scripture readings and the life of a saint of the day to members and friends of St Stephen's, and this has garnered a great deal of positive feedback.

Highlights of the year (besides Pascha and its post-party) include our outdoor Great Sanctification of Waters at Lima's reservoirs, our Nameday festival, Cedar Point outing, successful fundraisers (chicken dinners, "Super Sub Sundays," spaghetti dinners and White Elephant auctions), the National Day of Prayer, our Bright Week cookouts/karaoke night/Reds game, our St Nicholas Day celebration with the Orthodox group ELIJAH!, neighborhood Christmas caroling, and joint prayer services for Thanksgiving, Palm Sunday night and Good Friday with area clergy groups and congregations. Father Mark posted on YouTube one of his sermons at Philipppian Missionary Baptist, explaining the importance of the Creed (www.youtube.com/results?search_query=fathermarkhodges). This year Father also posted his lecture at the Sts Cyril and Methodius Conference in Toledo (St George -- Fr Paul Gassios), on "Engaging American Culture For Orthodoxy."

Again this year a couple of our members returned to the Hogar in Guatemala for service. (Father Mark finished his song, "The Smile of God," written for the Hogar while he was there years ago. It features the children themselves singing. Madre Ivonne is using the song in her fund raising efforts.)

Our whole community celebrated with Father Mark as he received his doctorate of ministry at St Stephen's in 2011. Father also welcomed his second grandchild, and joyfully baptized him with his other grandpa, Fr Philip Lashbrook.

Please, pray for us in Lima, Ohio!

St. Thomas the Apostle Orthodox Church

Kokomo, IN

Rector, Rev. Philip Lashbrook

October 6, 2010 – Harvest Party at the home of Arlen & Shirley Hartman

October 31, 2010 – Wedding of Meredith Wagner and Brian Arwood at St. Thomas.

April 24, 2011 (Pascha) – received Karen Trusty into the faithful

April 30, 2011 – Attended Bp. Matthias consecration in Chicago, IL

June 12, 2011 (Pentecost) – received Scott Hendricks into the faithful

July, 2011 – funerals of Edgar Taylor, and Bruce Privett, both men who have been ill and bedfast for a long time

July, 2011 – manned a booth for our church at the Haynes-Apperson Festival in downtown Kokomo, as an outreach to the community

July, 2011 – Nathanael Belt left for Air Force basic training; Katie followed in September

July 24-30, 2011 – sent 6 young people to St. John's Church Camp near Mitchell, IN

August 21, 2011 – Baptism of (infant) Morwen (Molly) Arwood

September – Sarah Fadil left for first year of college at Indiana Wesleyan in Marion, IN

September 1, 2011 – Birth of Gabriel Mark Hodges, born to Joshua and Carrie Hodges, grandson of Father Philip and Matushka Rebecca Lashbrook

We continue to meet with offenders at the Miami Correctional Facility twice a month. Father Philip is teaching catechism in the morning sessions, and also observing morning prayers, 3rd hour, and Beatitudes with the men there.

We also regularly collect gifts of food and basic needs, such as soaps, toothpaste, socks, gloves, etc. for the CAM organization here in Kokomo, for the support of the poor.

Christ the Savior/ Holy Spirit Orthodox Church

Cincinnati, OH

At our last Annual Parish Meeting, we reported a census of 207 members in the parish; of which 66 are children and adolescents below eighteen years of age.

In 2010 we had 15 baptisms and 8 chrismations. We have had 3 baptisms and 3 chrismations so far in 2011; with 7 more baptisms and 3 more chrismations “projected” for the remainder of the year from our Summer Catechetical Class. The parish has been experiencing steady growth over the course of the last few years and is now predominantly made up of young families and their children.

WORSHIP

In addition to the Lord’s Day cycle of Great Vespers , the Hours and Liturgy; we celebrate the Church’s festal cycle and we continue to schedule at least one weekday service.

EDUCATION

A Winter Reading Circle that meets for three sessions in late January – early February. We choose a classic of world literature to read and discuss.

A Spring/Summer Bible Study that extends from June through August. This past summer we studied ROMANS 12-16.

A Fall Adult Education Class that continues for six sessions beginning on November 6. We have yet to determine our book of study for this coming Fall.

A newly-established Christian Stewardship Committee that is exploring different and hopefully even more effective approaches to the theory and practice of stewardship on a parish level.

Fr. Steven remains an adjunct faculty member of Xavier University's theology department.

CHARITY

A local Kairos Prison ministry that we also provide funds for.

Full annual sponsorship of a child at the Hogar San Rafael Ayau Orphanage in Guatemala City.

An ongoing Food Pantry from which we assist local families that turn to the church with their needs.

Other collections that respond to ongoing needs as they arise either domestically or internationally.

St. Paul the Apostle,

Dayton, Ohio

During the course of the past year, St. Paul Parish:

- Increased its budget to include hiring a part time office assistant
- Received 6 converts into the faith, and currently has 9 converts in the process of becoming members
- Began an extended discussion among parishioners about spiritual gifts and is using a discernment process to help members realize their gifts in ministry in the parish
- Continued its successful Wednesday morning adult discussion group which averages 10 members per session
- Began several new adult discussion groups including one which studies the Sunday epistle reading each week, one which is geared for parents of young children, a once per month meeting for senior parish members, and one on Sunday evenings which is studying the unfolding of Christian doctrine through history.
- Expanded its successful greeters program for welcoming new people who join us at liturgy and who work to help integrate new attendees into the fellowship of the parish.

- Continued its charity program of distributing \$1000/month from the parish budget to charities

St John the Forerunner Orthodox Church

Indianapolis, IN

This year has seen 15 souls added to the Church either through Holy Baptism or Holy Charismation.

In March Vladyka Matthias came to meet our community and for us to meet our new Bishop. I feel the Bishop's visit was very helpful to us.

We have been focused on our Building Program. We brought our Capital Campaign to a close after raising \$750,000.00. We have had to rework our original building plan to something much more modest, yet will fulfill our needs.

The St John Choir has produced a CD of liturgical settings for the Divine Liturgy as a way to raise some money for the project. Others have through their ingenuity made more funds to contribute to the "cause." By our Heavenly Father's outrageous Love, we are debt free and own just over an acre of land. Through His Grace and the generosity of His People we are able to go forward without a large debt hanging over our heads.

We are committed to building in West Indianapolis. Many of the other Orthodox Churches in Indianapolis are choosing to move to the "burbs." We want to be a sign of God's love to the poor and downtrodden in our neighborhood. We are light in a dark place and we are not going to hide our light under a bushel. Hopefully we will be able to work out our issues with those in charge of permits and break ground very soon. Please pray with us that "the powers that be" will be moved to grant us our permits so that we can move forward.

We are partnering with various charitable organizations throughout the city and nationwide.

St John Summer Camp was very well attended with approximately 100 staff and campers attending.

One of our own has entered into the novitiate program at New Skete Monastery. We have had a very good relationship with New Skete over 30 years. (New Skete was very helpful to us in our journey into the Orthodox Church in spite of us being EOC. They accepting and loving toward us, compared to our experience with some other folks from the Orthodox Church who were less that caring and helpful).

Another has been accepted by OCMC to become a full time missionary. He is now raising his support to go to Mongolia – now that's dedication!

There are many more wonderful things being accomplished here in Indianapolis, in Indiana, by God Grace and Mercy.