

# THE MESSENGER

ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE ORTHODOX CHURCH • PO BOX 12635 • 5400 ANNIE OAKLEY DRIVE  
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89112-0635 • 702.898.4800 • WWW.LASVEGASORTHODOX.COM

## APRIL 2016 THE REAL STRUGGLE OF LENT

Lent and Pascha are so late this year! Each year, the April newsletter is the one where we can shout “Christ is Risen!” and focus on the Resurrection. Not this year. As I sit at the keyboard and start typing these words, we have just finished the first week of Great Lent; a week which, as usual, was beautiful, tiring, and exasperating. The fatigue is obvious – lots of services, confessions and fasting. Tired! The exasperation is the frustration of a pastor, seeing 200-300 people on the parish radar and 30-40 at the services of Lent for what the Church calls “Clean Week.” Not much “cleaning” going on it would seem. The beauty of the week was profound. There was the obvious beauty – the contrast of the purple vestments with the white/gold vestments we wore until Forgiveness Sunday. The candle-lit church descending into darkness, with the icons being slowly illuminated by the candlelight. The beautiful solemnity of the melodies that the choir sings in services jarringly lenten.

But there was also a beauty that was experienced outside of the church building and the services. My wife and I are very strictly lenten the first week of the Fast. Essentially vegan in diet, we also eat less in actual amounts and have very simple menus. I personally try to skip lunch and have maybe a banana with some peanut butter for breakfast. If we snack at all, it is some nuts or fruit. We attend, of course, all the scheduled services and hear the words of St. Andrew of Crete which call us all to such a deep realization of the distance we have allowed to grow between us and God and the call to come back. We are nourished by the Eucharist in the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts just a few days into the Fast and already mindful of the need for nourishment if we are to continue the journey. But most importantly, we turn off the television and the radios, most of the “noise” that bombards us all the time. It was impossible to avoid completely, of course. But in those moments that we controlled, the noise was gone. I say all of this not to “toot my own horn,” so to speak, or even to recommend this schedule to anyone. I mention it merely for context.

I noticed something right away after eliminating so much distraction. I started not only reading my daily discipline of the Scriptures, but the great book which I had been “strolling” through for quite some time was finished with the last 200 pages going down in three days while the first 300 pages had taken a couple of months with all the distractions and excuses for not picking it up. The second volume of that set is now started. I also started sleeping much better than usual. While part of that was all the services, etc., of the first week of Lent simply wearing me out, that is not the only reason. My mind was not racing with a million thoughts when I laid down. I fell into peaceful and uninterrupted sleep. I slept later than usual (not a lot but noticeable). The barrage of bad news beamed daily into our lives (even moment by moment, it seems!), did not disturb me or my sleep. Ignorance was bliss!

But then the second week of Lent arrived and the rigors of the first week are relaxed a bit in our house. The menus are not as spartan as the first week, we even get a little creative with lenten foods being presented in a more palatable, even enjoyable, way. There are not daily services as in the first week. The great electronic beast (which comes in many forms and shapes!) was allowed off its chain and back into our house. The tangible peace of the first week has been traded for a “lenten” version of normal life. Yes, more services (although we have regular Wednesday services even when it’s not Lent), and a heightened concern for food choices and amounts. On top of that, we have been struggling with telephone problems at the church, and we had a council

# APRIL 2016

St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church • Las Vegas, Nevada

<p><b>SUNDAY MAY 1<sup>st</sup> IS HOLY PASCHA!</b></p>				<p><b>GREETERS</b></p> <p>APR 3: CAMPBELL/STAFFORD APR 10: MCAULEY/DEMKO APR 17: OSBURN/CHONG APR 24: WHEELER/MASON PASCHA: ALL GREETERS</p>		<p><b>1</b></p> <p>LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS, 8:00 AM</p> <p><b>LENTEN YOUTH RETREAT ST. JOHN CHURCH</b></p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>LENTEN YOUTH RETREAT ST. JOHN CHURCH</b></p> <p>CHOIR REHEARSAL 3 PM PANIKHIDA, 4:30 PM GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS</p>
<p><b>3</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: HOOD EPISTLE: HUFFMAN POST-COMM: WHEELER CHURCH SCHOOL <b>LENTEN VESPERS, 6:00 PM, St. JOHN'S</b></p>	<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>5</b></p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>CONFESSIONS, 5:30 PM LITURGY OF THE PRE- SANCTIFIED GIFTS, 6:30 Soup/Bread</p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p><b>8</b></p> <p>LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS, 8:00 AM</p>	<p><b>9</b></p> <p><b>LENTEN RETREAT 9:00 AM ST. JOHN CHURCH</b></p> <p>RUSSIAN CONFESSIONS, 9 AM SLAVONIC LITURGY, 10 AM PANIKHIDA, 4:30 PM GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS</p>	
<p><b>10</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: TESFAY EPISTLE: DEMKO POST-COMM: PARKER CHURCH SCHOOL <b>LENTEN VESPERS, 6:00 PM, St. SIMEON'S</b></p>	<p><b>11</b></p>	<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>13</b></p> <p>BAPTISM, 10:00 AM</p> <p>CONFESSIONS, 5:30 PM LITURGY OF THE PRE- SANCTIFIED GIFTS, 6:30 Soup/Bread</p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p><b>15</b></p> <p>MATINS WITH AKATHIST TO THE THEOTOKOS, 6:30 PM</p>	<p><b>16</b></p> <p><b>BAPTISM OF WEST FAMILY, 2:00 PM</b></p> <p>CHOIR REHEARSAL 3 PM GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM CONFESSIONS</p>	
<p><b>17</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: BROOKS EPISTLE: HOOD POST-COMM: DEMKO LAST CHURCH SCHOOL <b>LENTEN VESPERS, 6:00 PM, St. PAUL'S</b></p>	<p><b>18</b></p>	<p><b>19</b></p> <p>PARISH COUNCIL, 6:00 PM</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p>CONFESSIONS, 5:30 PM LITURGY OF THE PRE- SANCTIFIED GIFTS, 6:30 Soup/Bread</p>	<p><b>21</b></p> <p>ERITREAN SERVICE, 8:00 AM COFFEE CHAT, 10:00 AM</p>	<p><b>22</b></p> <p>VESPERS OF LAZARUS SATURDAY, 6:30 PM CONFESSIONS</p>	<p><b>23</b></p> <p>PROSKOMEDIA, 9:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY <b>LAZARUS SATURDAY</b></p> <p>GREAT VESPERS, 5:00 PM BLESSING OF PALMS CONFESSIONS</p>	
<p><b>24</b></p> <p>DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM Hours: DEMKO EPISTLE: STRANSKY POST-COMM: ABRAHAM <b>PALM SUNDAY</b></p>	<p><b>HOLY MONDAY 25</b></p> <p>LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS, 8:00 AM</p> <p>BRIDEGROOM MATINS, 6:30 PM</p>	<p><b>HOLY TUESDAY 26</b></p> <p>LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS, 8:00 AM</p> <p>BRIDEGROOM MATINS, 6:30 PM</p>	<p><b>HOLY WEDNESDAY 27</b></p> <p>LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS, 8:00 AM</p> <p>MATINS OF HOLY THURSDAY, 6:30 PM</p>	<p><b>HOLY THURSDAY 28</b></p> <p>VESPERS AND LITURGY OF ST. BASIL, 9:00 AM</p> <p>MATINS with PASSION GOSPELS, 6:30 PM</p>	<p><b>HOLY FRIDAY 29</b></p> <p>VESPERS OF HOLY FRIDAY, 3:00 PM SOUP/BREAD MATINS OF HOLY SATURDAY, 5:30 PM</p>	<p><b>HOLY SATURDAY 30</b></p> <p>OSBURN CHRISMATION,, VESPERS AND LITURGY OF ST. BASIL, 9:00 AM</p> <p><b>Nocturnes Paschal Matins Paschal Liturgy 11:00 PM</b></p>	

# St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church

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## RECTOR

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## CHOIR DIRECTORS

Matushka Elizabeth Dresko  
Grace Brooks  
Jarrod Huffman

## PARISH COUNCIL

Virginia Hood, Vice-President  
Karen Short, Treasurer  
Catherine Wilkalis, Secretary

Gregory Brooks  
James Brophy  
Kevin McAuley  
Karen Murphy  
Litsa Osburn  
Joseph Wheeler

## SUB-COMMITTEES

Building & Grounds  
Kevin McAuley

Eritrean & Ethiopian Outreach  
Tekeste Nuguru

Russian Outreach  
Natalia Minkoff

Church School/Youth  
Dn. Stephen Osburn, Jr.  
Amy McAuley  
Stephan Tanksley

Fellowship Committee  
Charity Committee

meeting on Tuesday, discussing all sorts of normal things to maintain and grow the life of our parish.

Guess what? When I put my head on the pillow this second week of the Fast, it races with a million things again. I started waking up at my usual early hour with those same thoughts in my head. The book of good intentions (the second volume) has been started, but in trickles. And I have gone from peaceful, blissful ignorance to terrorist attacks (and the obligatory “prayer memes” on Facebook) and a political season that looks like it came right from central casting for a Netflix political series. Argh!

There is a lesson here. We sometimes are so wrapped up in doing the right “things” during a fasting effort that we forget that part of the fast has to be *silence*. The Prophet Elijah did not hear the Lord in a great wind, an earthquake, or a fire, but in a “still, small voice.” (3 Kings 19) Silence is the language of God. If Lent is to be profitable, we must not only fast, pray, come to services, repent of our sins, and give alms. We must learn to be still.

When we start fasting, it is hard. But as we continue and maintain an effort, it becomes not easy, but *easier*. When we try to pray, it is hard to free our minds of the clutter that prevents attentive prayer. But as we continue and maintain an effort, it becomes not easy, but *easier*. When we try to tame our passions, it is hard to let go of those familiar, and comfortable, things in our life which are actually choking us. But as we continue and maintain an effort, it becomes not easy, but *easier*.

The real struggle of Lent is not checking off boxes: right food? Check! A couple more prayers? Check! Schedule confession? Check! Come to more services? Well....maybe. The real struggle is closing out the world, freeing our minds, hearts and souls to discern what God is asking of us then **responding**. It is trading what we normally see as “important” for the things that save. Not looking at anyone else’s effort but my own. If we can win that struggle, if we can be quiet, it will have been a worthwhile struggle indeed. Let’s cross the finish line together!

*Father John*

## MARK THE DATES

**April 1-2: Lenten Youth Retreat, St. John Church**

**April 2: CHOIR REHEARSAL, 3:00 PM**

**April 9: Lenten Retreat, Fr. Irenei Steenberg, St. John Church, 9:00 AM**  
**Russian Confessions, 9:00 AM; Slavonic Liturgy, 10:00 AM**

**April 16: Baptism of the West Family, 2:00 PM**

**CHOIR REHEARSAL, 3:00 PM**

**April 23: Lazarus Saturday, Proskomedia & Liturgy, 9:00 AM**

**Vespers and Blessing of Palms, 5:00 PM; LAST CONFESSIONS**

**April 19: Parish Council Meeting, 6:00 PM**

**April 24-30: Palm Sunday and Holy Week (see calendar for schedule)**

**April 30: Chrismation of Stephen Osburn, Sr. before liturgy**

**May 1: HOLY PASCHA**

Send email addresses and corrections to:  
[fatherjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com](mailto:fatherjohn@lasvegasorthodox.com)

## FEASTDAYS

During April, we celebrate the following feasts:

### NORMAL LENTEN SERVICES

LITURGY OF THE PRESANCTIFIED GIFTS

WEDNESDAY EVENINGS, 6:30 PM

FRIDAY MORNINGS, 8:00 AM (LAST

FRIDAY APRIL 8TH)

AKATHIST TO THE THEOTOKOS

April 15, 6:30 PM

LAZARUS SATURDAY

April 23

VESPERS OF LAZARUS, 6:30 PM (FRI)

PROSKOMEDIA/LITURGY, 9:00 AM (SAT)

PALM SUNDAY

April 24

VESPERS WITH BLESSING OF PALMS,

6:30 PM (SAT)

DIVINE LITURGY, 9:00 AM (SUN)

**In addition, there is a full schedule of Holy Week and Paschal services beginning on Monday, April 25. See calendar and weekly bulletin for full schedule of days and times.**

## LENTEN NOTES

Everyone is encouraged to make an effort to be present at as many of the services as possible, during the whole of Great Lent. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served on Wednesday evenings and Friday mornings during the whole of Great Lent to make it possible for those with varying schedules to attend at least one per week – if you can, attend both!

We break the fast after the liturgy on Wednesday evenings with soup and bread. *A sign-up list is available in the church hall for those who can volunteer to bring either or.*

**Fasting for the evening liturgies is as follows:** a total fast during the day for those who can physically do such. If you cannot keep a day long fast, a total fast at least from the noon-time meal must be kept. Of course, a

total fast must be kept for the Friday morning liturgy.

Sunday evening Vespers will be served at 6:00 PM each Sunday during Lent. We rotate the location each week; see the calendar or weekly bulletin for locations. We will be hosting the last one on April 17.

## CONFESSIONS

Every Orthodox Christian of confessing age makes the journey to the Sacrament of Confession during Great Lent. Father has scheduled confessions on Wednesday evenings 5:30–6:20 (before the liturgy) and Saturday evenings after Vespers. Appointments may also be made at other times.

**Father does not mind scheduling separate appointments** – in many ways, it is easier!

**Confessions will only be heard by appointment for good reason after the Eve of Palm Sunday (April 23).** Please do not wait until the last moment!

If you are of confessing age and wish to commune at the Paschal Liturgy, you are requested to make a confession during Great Lent.

## PASCHAL NOTES

Pascha this year is on May 1<sup>st</sup>. Services will begin at **11:00 PM on Saturday evening, April 30.** Nocturne, Paschal Matins and Paschal Liturgy will be served, followed by Blessing of Baskets. Everyone is reminded that the doors of the hall will be locked at the start of the services, but tables will be set up outside to place baskets for blessing.

Baskets will be blessed again after Paschal Vespers, served at 12:00 pm (Noon) on May 1<sup>st</sup>, for those who cannot be with us at midnight.

Our annual Agape Meal will be held on the Sunday following Pascha (Thomas Sunday), May 8. The parish provides the meats for the dinner. A

sign-up list for the side dishes will be available.

## YOUTH RETREAT

Our annual Lenten youth retreat will be held April 1-2 at St. John's Church, beginning at 6:00 PM. The topic will be *Fools for Christ: Lessons in Wisdom*. We will have the third stasis of the Akathist to the Theotokos, confessions and discussion sessions. Father John and Father Stephen will both be leading discussions. Middle School and High School age kids are welcome – please let Father Stephen know if you plan to attend.

## ADULT RETREAT

Our annual Lenten retreat will be held on Saturday, April 9, at St. John the Baptist Church. The speaker will be Father Irenei Steenberg, who will speak on *Beginning a Life of Prayer*. Cost is \$15 per person and checks may be made to "St. Paul Orthodox Church" and may be given to Father John. Please join us!

## SLAVONIC SERVICE

Father Alexander will be here on the customary second Saturday of the month (April 9). Russian language confessions begin at 9:00 AM. Slavonic Liturgy is scheduled for 10:00 AM.

## CATECHUMENS TO BE RECEIVED

After time and instruction, we rejoice that the West family: James, Deborah and Jessie, will be baptized into the Church on Saturday, April 16 at 2:00 PM.

We also rejoice that on Holy Saturday, April 30, Stephen Osburn, Sr. will be Chrismated into the Faith before the Vespertine Liturgy.

## LAZARUS SATURDAY

As has become customary in our parish, Father John will be doing the Proskomedie (preparation of the

bread and wine) Service in the nave of the church on Lazarus Saturday. **All church school students are asked to be present!** We will begin at 9:00 AM and everyone will have an opportunity to commemorate their loved ones for the liturgy.

Following liturgy, we will have a light breakfast for everyone and then need assistance in getting the palms and willow branches ready for blessing on Saturday evening at Vespers.

#### HELP NEEDED

As we did last year and received such a wonderful response, we have a few families that would like to come for the whole Paschal weekend but live far away. If you can accommodate someone for a few days to help them all celebrate with us, it would be much appreciated. Please let Father John know if you can help.

#### FEEDING THE HOMELESS

Our next Feeding the Homeless project will be held on a date to be determined after Pascha. If you can donate any of the items needed for the lunches (or funds to provide such), it would be appreciated.

#### PROJECT MEXICO

St Paul's has teamed up with Amazon to have a small bit of your purchase go towards our Project Mexico Youth Trip. So before you order anything from Amazon online, type in the link and thank you for your support.

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/88-0242982>

**A reminder that we still have 2016 Orthodox Wall Calendars available in the vestibule for a minimum donation of \$5.00 per calendar. All the proceeds from those sales go to our Project Mexico trip.**

#### ADULT FAITH FORUM

Our Wednesday evening Adult Faith Forum sessions go on hiatus for Great Lent due to Wednesday services. We will resume after Pascha. We will have Daily Vespers at 6:30 PM, followed by a one hour discussion. This year's topic is *Christ and the Church in the Old Testament*. Please join us!

#### CHARITY

Our normal collections of food for Friends of the Desert continue. Needs: jelly, jam, peanut butter, canned fruit, canned tuna/chicken. Thank you!

#### ORTHODOX VENDORS

A list of businesses that our parish uses or are owned and operated by Orthodox Christians (some parishioners). We provide this information for you to consider if you need services.

CB Air Conditioning  
Cedomir Blagojevic  
(702) 493-0295

Dolphin Court Salon & Day Spa  
7581 W. Lake Mead Blvd.  
(702) 946-6000

Kyklos Café (Greek food)  
Galleria Mall  
Sophocles Frangakis  
(702) 450-1515

Makeup and Hair Artist  
Natalia Kasimtseva (Baker)  
(I travel to client location)  
Text or call: (702) 336-8300  
View portfolio at:  
[www.facebook.com/NataliaKasBeauty](http://www.facebook.com/NataliaKasBeauty)

Westfield Eye Center  
C. Edward Yee, MD  
2575 Lindell Road  
(702) 362-3937

#### PRAYER FOR OUR PARISH

We ask everyone to remember our parish in daily prayer:  
Lord, God and Savior of all, we thank You for the blessing of St. Paul parish in our lives. May Your word become alive in each and every one of us who strive to follow You. Please bless and multiply all the gifts – time, talent and treasure – which are given in thanks to benefit our mission and glorify Your name. Bless and multiply the givers and help us all to make present Your Kingdom. For You are the Giver of all that is good, O Christ our God, and to You we give glory, together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

#### SACRAMENTS/SPECIAL SERVICES

Please follow these guidelines.

- Baptisms. A personal meeting scheduled with Fr. John will be necessary to schedule any baptism requested.
- Matrimony. A date and time for weddings must be requested at least six months (preferably twelve) in advance. There will be premarital sessions for both bride and groom to attend.
- Memorials (Panikhida). Requests for a memorial must be made at least one week in advance. If possible, the service should be served on Saturday. Other requests will be met as pastorally possible.

#### PARISH COUNCIL SYNOPSIS

#### MARCH 22, 2016 MEETING

*Rector's Report:* Archbishop Benjamin's visit for Father Stephen's ordination went wonderfully well. Noted a sign of a healthy parish is when a "son of the parish" is able to become a priest in that parish. Observed that Viorel Ionescu, a talented chef,

served up amazing meat dishes for the reception; he has also been invited to prepare meat dishes for the agape meal after Pascha.

Reminded all about the Lenten retreat by Father Irenei Steenberg, at St. John's parish April 9. Cost \$15. Make reservations with Father John Dresko.

St. Paul's will host Pan Orthodox Vespers on Sunday, April 17. The service of Holy Unction will be given at St. John's Greek Orthodox Church on Holy Wednesday.

Archbishop Benjamin has designated Father Stephen's status in St. Paul's parish as an Associate Priest. This is an official assignment higher than "attached". It requires him to be formally released and reassigned if this is needed.

Informed council that the West family will be baptized and received into the church on April 16th. Stephen Osburn Sr., the father of Priest Stephen Osburn, will be Chrismated into the Church on Holy Saturday. Jim Brophy will serve as his Sponsor.

*Associate Priest's Report:* Father Stephen informed council of his recent activities as priest to council members – (report summarized):

Thanks to all at St. Paul's for their love, prayers, and support on his recent ordination to the Priesthood. Special thanks to Father John Dresko and Matushka Liz for their love and support on this journey, offering wisdom and benefit of their experience as needed. Expressed hopes that he and Lindsay will be able to fulfill this parish's every expectation.

Father Stephen will be going to Hesperia, CA once a month through at least May 2016 to serve as substitute priest to the mission church St. George located there, starting this Sunday, March 27.

Performed his first Baptism: a

little Russian girl named Anna and his first Burial Service for Fern Marie Bica. Observed that he has served a lot of "firsts"!

*Vice President's Report:* Reported Caryn Wheeler has approved moving one of the display cases into the parish hall, as well as some of the books. Ginny will see if her school maintenance man could assist with moving the display cases and items. Theresa Mason will be the alternate bookstore contact person when Caryn is not available. Caryn will do an inventory of bookstore items, and compile a list of the prices so sales can continue if both she and Teresa are absent.

Bill Murphy has assessed the parish hall for installation of cabinets.

Landscaper is keeping up with the woodchips in the courtyard. Ginny is still in process of negotiating the fees with him; last summer it was \$220 a month – he is now asking \$350. The extra price is for resupplying the wood chips to keep the grounds topped up.

*Treasurer's Report:* Karen Short distributed our financials before the meeting:

Capital Fund: \$3,949.86

Rainy Day: \$20,180.64

Icon Fund: \$10,406.49

Income for February was \$20,104.90, with expenses of \$20,967.35 for a **deficit of \$862.45**.

#### YEAR-TO-DATE

2015 Inc \$ 49,158.57

2015 Exp \$ 42,230.32

Inc over Exp \$ 6,928.25

All parish finances including accounts payable are totally current.

GoldStar Trust: Parish received \$16,597 from GoldStar for reimbursement of closing costs. Transferred \$7267.00 to savings to make savings (Rainy Day fund)

\$20,030.64. The \$9300.00 remaining will be used to pay down the bonds. We will continue to put \$250/month into Rainy Day Fund. If finances look good by July, we may be able to make another large pay-down of bonds. We expect to keep the Rainy Day fund at current level, which should cover most contingencies.

Father John commented on the Treasurer's position and suggested changing the bylaws to make the position require specific accounting expertise and not subject to the term limits of two 3-year terms now currently required. To ensure future coverage of this vitally important position, Joe Wheeler has agreed to learn the job of Treasurer. Father will present the proposal at a later date to amend the bylaws at the annual meeting.

#### COMMITTEES

*Building and Grounds: Church and parish hall doors:* Kevin was in contact with the door installation technician; he is expected on site next week for final measurements and planning a date for installation. Kevin will sign papers with the contractor next week and get "before and after" photos.

**Storage cabinets in the Parish Hall.** Measurements and specifications have been completed. Permanent cabinets and Corian counters (which counters Kevin can arrange to have donated) are selected. Installation costs estimated to be up to \$6700, but may possibly be less. The council approved in principle this project, subject to final figures.

There is currently \$4100 in the Capital Fund, which will be expended before we use the bond funds. The 2015 annual meeting approved a budget of \$1500 for this project. The Parish Council does not have authority to spend more than \$5000 for any single expenditure. Expenditures

oin excess of \$5000 not budgeted or previously approved require the calling of a special parish meeting, with a 3-week lead-time. If the final figures are more than \$6500 (\$5000 above the approved amount) a special parish meeting must be called. Bill Murphy is expected to e-mail Kevin with these figures no later than Sunday, 3/27.

**Kitchen and Hall Floor Maintenance:** Ginny Hood will contact her school maintenance man to perform these services before Pascha.

**Church Phone Lines:** Father John informed council we still have no CenturyLink phone service to the parish. Incompetence on the part of CenturyLink ensued when our two-year contract was up, and we negotiated a new contract for only one line instead of three, with double the internet speed. (The difference in cost to the parish is \$88 per month versus the former \$270/month.) We await the repairs.

*Charity:* Feeding the homeless was accomplished March 19th. 15–20 parishioners turned out to volunteer. 180 lunch bags, 150 pairs of socks, and 150 hygiene packs were distributed. Starting balance was \$376.26; expenditures were \$74.63, leaving a balance of \$301.63. This month a total of \$250 in monetary donations was received leaving a carry-over balance of \$551.63. Cathy noted that we are doing very well with monetary donations. She said that although it appears to be a surplus, part of the funds received are designated for special items e.g. socks, and later this year hygiene items will need to be resupplied and purchased. She will look into bulk purchases of these items online. Date for the next homeless feeding TBA.

*IOCC:* IOCC representative Ken Kasemeotes will present his program detailing the relief projects being accomplished in Syria at St. John's

Greek Orthodox church on April 10.

*Church School/Youth:* There will be a youth retreat at St. John's Church on April 1-2. 15 young people from this parish are planning to attend.

The last Church School class of the year will be April 17th. The Parish Church School Picnic will take place on Pentecost Sunday.

*Project Mexico:* Father Stephen reported on status of Project Mexico: Currently 14 out of 15 youth are confirmed participants. Two still need passports. If they do not get their passports by this weekend, their slots will be opened up and they may be unable to attend. The council discussed whether all 15 slots should be funded due to uncertainties about final attendance figures. Council decided to pay for all 15 slots; determining that any remaining vacant slot(s) would be opened to and filled by other interested persons from either this parish or St. John's. Final payment of \$4870 is due by March 31<sup>st</sup>.

The youth will do a coffee hour fundraiser on April 3<sup>rd</sup> and in May, date TBA; a carwash is planned for May. There may be other fundraisers planned.

*Eritrean/Ethiopian:* There have been no further problems with the condition of the church and hall to this date.

*Fellowship:* International Dinner fundraiser, including a Silent Auction planned for May 28.

*Outreach/website:* Father Stephen's Ordination pictures have been posted.

*Russian:* Father Alexander will be at St. Paul's in April for the Slavonic Liturgy.

*Stewardship:* Reported a few pledges have still been coming in.

## OLD BUSINESS

*Iconography:* Vladimir (Vova) Krass-

ovsky is now planning to come on May 9th to install the Icons in the sanctuary. It is estimated that this will take one day with two days of "finishing" and require the use of a small lift.

*Security Concern:* Guidelines were distributed to parish council members for review last month. Status quo.

*Greeters Training:* Father John is still planning to conduct training for ushers after Lent. Date TBA.

## NEW BUSINESS

*None*

*Next Council Meeting:*  
Tuesday, April 19, 2016.

## PARISH DIPTYCHS

This list of parish departed is to remind us all of those whom we love and miss and to spur us to remember them in our daily prayers. They will be remembered in the proskomedia before each liturgy.

## MONTH OF APRIL

Henry VanBentem  
April 2, 1996

Helen Turlish  
April 4, 1993

Irene Sachanko  
April 4, 2012

Ann Carol Boris  
April 7, 1997

Sebastian Bica  
April 7, 2008

Vasil Smith  
April 8, 2002

Homer Koliba  
April 11, 2011

Svetlana Tarabanova  
April 13, 2008

Alexander Mednikov  
April 18, 2009

Nadya Gridneva  
April 19, 2008

Marie Hudson  
April 24, 1997

Mariam Kidane  
April 27, 1995

Melvin Korich  
April 29, 1996

Larisa Martin  
April 29, 2004

Mary Volz  
April 29, 2006

Anastasios Lymeropoulos  
April 30, 1990

## FATHER STEPHEN'S CORNER UNDERSTANDING OUR MORTALITY

Death is unnatural. God did not create us so we could die. He created us so that we could live and love Him, freely – I might add, without any condition. But our first parents, Adam and Eve rebelled against God and we were left with the results: to become “temporary” citizens of this world, one that is bonded to physical death and decay. Our bond with death is something we have no choice to endure. Every living creature will and does eventually die. Our lives are tied to the Fall of Creation, whether we like it or not. It can seem quite morbid. It may even seem depressing. However, we as Orthodox Christians and the Church know that our hope in all of this doom and gloom is in our savior Jesus Christ. He conquered Death by His own Death and His own Resurrection on the Third Day. Death in reality has no hold over us, so then why do and must we still

die? The answer isn't why we still die; rather, the answer lies in a bigger question. What death do we die?

When we will hear the Paschal Troparian on May 1st, what we will hear is that Christ conquers the spiritual death. This is the death that really binds us to the world. The spiritual death is the one that is absent of God's presence and places us in Hell. When we are spiritually dead, we are nothing more than walking corpses preparing for a hole in the ground. Everything in life is meaningless because there is nothing to look forward to, there is no hope for us. Nothingness becomes our creed and as believers when we are spiritually dead. We are nothing more than good moral atheists.

There is only one time when we are allowed or rather permitted to die spiritually.

It is the moment when we are immersed in the waters of Baptism and raised out of that same water as Christians called to take up our Crosses and follow Jesus Christ.

After this one concession in our lives, we are called to be on a special journey where we must focus our lives entirely on serving others, praying, fasting, and seeking Communion with God. Finally, Lent gives us a special chance to look at our understanding of death and to renew our baptismal efforts. Lent is a unique perspective or opportunity for and in our lives. Above all the fasting, praying, and changes made in our lives, Lent is like medical treatment to help cure us from the spiritual death and keep us from dying before we see our Resurrection. All the things we do in Lent are designed to refocus our efforts to the things that Christ commands us to do as His followers.

Lent is often said to be a reset button in our Christian lives but I would take it further and say, Lent is also a re-charge of our Orthodox battery. While we do have this beautiful chance to renew our own individual efforts, we also are given a boost by the Church through the increase of liturgical services. It is very important that we make every effort we can to attend as many services as possible. Sure, many of us have jobs and families that may conflict with those extra services and God understands that, but it is in our best interest to take every opportunity to attend and participate the best we can.

Furthermore, to be alive in Christ is to die to our old selves and become renewed and restored in Him. When we do eventually actually die, we want to be able to say to God, “I physically died, but I did not spiritually die, rather I lived in and for You.”

