

Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania Eastern Deanery Report, 2023

The Eastern Deanery consists of the following active parishes:

1. Holy Ascension Church, Colver
2. SS. Peter & Paul Church, Altoona V. Rev. Andrew Matychak, Rector

3. Holy Assumption Church, Central City
4. SS. Peter & Paul Church, Pine Hill Rev. Elijah Bremer, Rector

5. Holy Trinity Church, State College Rev. Ignatius Hunter, Rector; Rev. David Smith, Associate Priest; ProtoDn. Mark Oleynik, attached

6. Chapel of the Holy Spirit, Beavertown Rev. David Smith, Administrator

7. Nativity of St. John Church, Philipsburg (Chester Hill) *Administrated by the Dean with assistance by Archimandrite John-Jacob (Piruta).*

8. Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church, Osceola Mills Archimandrite John-Jacob (Piruta), Rector

9. St. Michael Church, Irvona
10. Nativity of the Theotokos Church, Madera V. Rev. Alexander Cadman, Rector

11. St. Michael Church, Portage
12. SS. Peter & Paul Church, Vintondale V. Rev. Gregory Tsjouman, Rector

13. St. John the Baptist Church, Johnstown (Conemaugh) V. Rev. George Johnson, Rector

14. St. John the Baptist Church, Black Lick (Blairsville) *Administrated by the Dean; V. Rev. Andre Alexiev, Attached*

15. St. Nicholas Church, DuBois V. Rev. Mark Meholick, Rector
16. SS. Peter & Paul Church, Urey

Some notable events in the life of the Eastern Deanery include the following: Archpriest Alexander Cadman, who was Acting Rector, was appointed Rector of St. Michael Church, Irvona, and the Nativity of the Theotokos Church, Madera. Subdeacon John Kerstetter was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek and is attached to the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, Beavertown. Subdeacon Christopher Meholick was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek and is attached to St. Nicholas Church in DuBois. Joseph Young was tonsured Reader and Subdeacon. He assists Fr. Mark Meholick at SS. Peter & Paul Church in Urey. On August 19th, his Eminence and the faithful of Altoona and beyond gathered to honor the 50 years of pastoral service of Archpriest Andrew Matychak. Rdr. Evan Ashmore of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in State College, PA is enrolled to begin the three-year Master of Divinity program at St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary this fall. On Sunday, July 30, members from St. Nicholas Church in DuBois, Ss. Mary and Michael Parish in Irvona and Madera, Nativity of the Virgin Mary and Nativity of the St. John the Baptist Churches in Osceola Mills and Chester Hill, Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Urey, and Ss. Peter and Paul Church (UOCUSA) in Elmora gathered at Curwensville Lake Recreation Area for the second annual Orthodox Family Picnic.

Respectfully submitted by Archpriest Mark Meholick, *Dean*

2 October, 2023

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church Black Lick, Pennsylvania

During the last year, one new catechumen was made, the husband of a parishioner who returned to our church after many years absence. He is scheduled to be baptized on Lazarus Saturday of next year.

In July, we lost another catechumen, Nicholas, who died in a tragic car accident. His wife, Angela, remains a catechumen .

Our parish awarded one new seminarian with a scholarship from the Archbishop Job Memorial Scholarship. John Paul Chakot hopes to make a presentation about the Scholarship at the Diocesan Meeting, with His Eminence's blessing.

Our parish upgraded the church basement to be a more appropriate church hall. Plans are in the works to make one corner dedicated to Archbishop Job with memorabilia associated with him. Plans are also underway to build a handicap entrance to the basement.

The sale of the old church hall was completed; there remains a small portion of land in the vicinity of the old church and hall. The sale of this land will be used towards the building of the handicap entrance.

I have instituted a bible study every two weeks, sometimes in the church hall, at other times, parishioners have hosted it in their homes. Services have upgraded to include Matins every Sunday morning, with Vigil services on the eves of major feasts.

Finally, with the blessing of my hierarch, Archbishop Peter of Chicago, I was tonsured a monk at St. John the Theologian Monastery in Hiram, Ohio on May 21st. I was given the name of Alexis in honor of St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre. I am attached to the Brotherhood of St. John of the Ladder at the monastery of Sts. Sergius and Herman of Valaam in Atlantic Mine, Michigan. As of the present time, I am continuing to serve St. John the Baptist church in Black Lick and Archangel Michael Serbian Orthodox church in Monroeville.

Hieromonk Alexei (Alexiev)

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, DuBois, PA
SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church, Urey, PA
Archpriest Mark Meholick, Rector

During this past year, there were two baptisms and the blessing of a marriage at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in DuBois. There was one baptism and one funeral at SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church in Urey.

In December, Catechetical Classes were taught on Wednesday evenings at St. Nicholas Church. The annual Christmas Bake Sale was held on December 10, 2022

On January 17, 2023 St. Nicholas Church hosted a Red Cross Blood Drive; On February 10, we had a pre-Lenten Dinner/Dance Polka Party; On March 5th, we hosted Mission Vespers for the Sunday of Orthodoxy; Bible Study and Catechetical Classes were held following the Liturgy of Presanctified Gifts on Wednesday evenings during Great Lent. Our Annual Easter Bake Sale was held on Saturday, April 1. We again hosted the "Illini 4000" on June 2 & 3. This is a group of College Students who bicycle across the U.S. to raise funds for cancer research. On June 9th, we had a "70s Night Dinner / Dance" in the parish hall. (These Dinner/Dances are for raising funds for the Building Maintenance Fund). On July 22, Subdeacon Christopher Meholick was ordained to the Holy Diaconate by His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek. The Annual "Life Chain Event" was hosted by St. Nicholas Parish, this year on October 3, in anticipation of the Annual Life Chain on October 8th. October 9th, another Red Cross Blood Drive at St. Nicholas Parish Hall; October 15th, an "Oktoberfest" Dinner/Dance.

Our website (www.Stnicholasdubois.org) has recently been updated by Matushka Kira Meholick. St. Nicholas Church has several Seekers and Cahtechumens.

Joseph Young was tonsured Reader and Subdeacon by His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek at St. Cyril & Methodius Church in Jeanette, PA and serves and conducts Reader's Services at SS. Peter & Paul Church in Urey, where he also serves as Parish Council President.

A fuller Liturgical schedule is now realized in both DuBois and Urey, with the assistance of Deacon Christopher Meholick and Subdeacon Joseph Young,

Submitted by
Archpriest Mark Meholick,
Rector.

St. Michael the Archangel Church, Irvona
Nativity of the Theotokos Church, Madera
Archpriest Alexander Cadman, Rector

In February 2023, Father Alexander Cadman marked the completion of his first year as the assigned priest for St. Michael the Archangel Church in Irvona and Nativity of the Theotokos Church in Madera. At that time, His Eminence Archbishop Melchisedek assigned him as Rector, from his previous role as Acting Rector.

During Father Alexander's first year, significant progress was made in uniting the two churches administratively. Notable achievements include:

1. Establishment of quarterly council meetings for each church.
2. Creation of a joint operating account for outreach, charitable, and fellowship activities.
3. Implementation of an online giving platform.
4. Development of operating budgets for each church.
5. Adoption of a cloud-based accounting system.
6. Introduction of an Annual Meeting in November, where both churches gather to approve budgets and discuss initiatives that promote collaboration and synergy between the two entities.

Both churches have experienced a notable increase in membership, growing by approximately 20% in the past year. Recognizing this growth, it was decided that 2023 would be a year to continue the gradual process of officially becoming "one parish of two churches."

In 2023, several accomplishments were achieved, including:

1. Establishment of an official partnership for jointly managing the former rectory, which generates rental income for the "parish."
2. Renovation projects in both Irvona and Madera, aimed at improving accessibility and expanding worship space. In Irvona, the nave was reconfigured to allow for more seating and the exterior steps were replaced and improved. In Madera, the nave was also reconfigured to allow for more worship space, drywall and insulation were installed, the choir loft expanded, walls and ceilings painted, and hardwood flooring and new carpeting were laid.
3. Generous contributions to newly-created charitable and outreach funds, which support local underprivileged persons, and major events like the Annual Clearfield County Orthodox Family Picnic and the First Responders Prayer Service and Appreciation Luncheon, respectively.

Looking ahead to 2024, both churches are committed to additional improvement projects, as well as three new "parish" initiatives:

1. Creation of a Central Pennsylvania Cemetery Endowment Fund, initially supporting the churchyards in Irvona, Madera, and Patton, with the possibility for others to join at a later date.
2. Establishment of a scholarship fund for graduating high school seniors in the area.
3. Organizing a parish retreat featuring external speakers and resources to guide the community's progress – physically, spiritually, and financially – toward official administrative unification.

It is our hope that the cooperation between our churches and other parishes in our region could serve as a model elsewhere in the Archdiocese. May God continue to bless these efforts for His glory.

Holy Trinity Orthodox Church State College, Pennsylvania

By God's grace, we have baptized and/or chrismated eight converts since last November. The number of our remaining catechumens stands at four, though there are likely to be several additional enrollments soon as God continues to bless us with many newcomers and inquirers. We have also baptized four infants since last Assembly.

A reader of our parish, Evan Ashmore, has been accepted into seminary at St. Tikhon's and is in his first semester there now. We are also engaged in a separation process with the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, with a formal institutional separation targeted for an undetermined point in 2024.

In March, we began a pledge campaign to eliminate our mortgage by mid-2025. To date, we have had pledges of over \$80,000 of our roughly \$300,000 target. It is our hope that we will be able to exhaust the mortgage before the beginning of 2026 and begin to undertake the next phase of our parish's growth at that time.

Submitted by Fr. Ignatius Hunter