

REPORT OF THE DEAN OF THE SOUTHWEST DEANERY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH AND WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA – November 4, 2023

Officers:

Rev. Andrew Nelko: Dean

Deacon David Rostcheck: Treasurer

The parishes of the *Southwest Deanery* include:

Belle Vernon, PA, Holy Resurrection	Rev. Stephan Gresh, Rector
Canonsburg, PA, St. John the Baptist	Rev. John Kotalik, Rector Protodeacon John Oleynik Deacon Theodosius Onest
Charleroi, PA, Holy Trinity	V. Rev. Gregory Peterson, Rector
Donora, PA, St. Nicholas	VACANT Deacon Robert Motichak
Jeannette, PA, Ss. Cyril & Methodius	V. Rev. Michael Senyo
Mingo Junction, OH, St. Andrew	VACANT
Monessen, PA, St. John the Divine	VACANT
Monongahela, PA, Nativity of the Virgin	VACANT Deacon David Rostcheck
New Salem, PA, Holy Trinity	V. Rev. Vitaly Dudkin, Rector
Steubenville, OH, Holy Transfiguration	VACANT
West Brownsville, PA, Holy Resurrection	VACANT
Weirton, WV, St. Nicholas	Rev. Andrew Nelko, Rector (Dean)
Wolf Run, OH, All Saints	VACANT

We currently have **Seven** parishes that are vacant out of a total of 13. As of now these parishes continue to be served by retired clergy and deacons periodically.

Although when looking at the deanery and seeing so many vacancies can be disheartening there are many good things happening in the parishes across the deanery. I thank all the clergy and lay leaders for their continued support and the work they are doing in their parishes. I also want to thank all the clergy who are helping serve many of our vacancies. V. Rev. Paul Suda, V. Rev. David Vernak, V. Rev. Michael Zahirsky, Rev. Michael Sochka, and V. Rev. Bob Prepelka from the Carpatho Diocese along with our Deacons: Motichak, Onest, Rostcheck, and Stahoviak. I especially want to thank Fr. Michael Zahirsky and Fr. John Kopcha. Fr.

Michael, in his retirement, recently moved and was transferred to the Diocese of the Midwest. Fr. John Kopcha, former dean and rector of St. Andrew's in Mingo, also retired at the end of September. We thank them both for their service and ay God grant them both many blessed years!

Each parish this year was also asked to submit a short report on their activities. Those reports can be found below.

Respectfully, submitted,



Rev. Andrew P. Nelko
Dean of the Southwest Deanery

Southwest Deanery Parish Reports

All Saints

Amsterdam (Wolf Run), Ohio
Rev. Andrew Nelko, Administrator

Since All Saints Orthodox Church does not have an assigned priest, Fr. Andrew Nelko has provided us with a visiting priest or deacon for Sunday services. When we are in need, Fr. Andrew has answered our calls. We are very appreciative of his help and guidance.

We continue to provide maintenance for our beautiful cemetery. The roofs have been replaced on the church, rectory, and garage. Maintenance of buildings and grounds continue. We continue to support the local Urban Mission, the local volunteer fire departments, food pantry, and also Ukrainian Aid. We have welcomed visitors from various cities in Ohio, Georgia, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, and even Germany. Visitors always comment on the beauty of our little church. With such a small membership, we hope to continue to have services when possible, and keep our parish open.

Holy Resurrection

West Brownsville, PA
Rev. Andrew Nelko, Administrator

Vacant. Currently being serviced by fill-in clergy on Sundays

Holy Resurrection

Belle Vernon, PA
Fr. Stephan Gresh, Rector

We are coming off of another busy year! Last year we had 3 weddings, multiple baptisms, funerals, as well as some major maintenance activities, (replacement of church air conditioner), in addition to the normal activities.

We have also been trying to do some simple outreach activities:

-During the festivals we have been keeping the church open and inviting people to come and see. As a result we have had some people ask what it would take to come back into the church as well as others who wanted to learn more about the church.

-we have been funding a simple Angel Bowl to offer simple assistance to those who come to us in need.

- we have been taking donations for small gifts to be given to random seminarians at Saint Tikhon's for Christmas and Pasca.
 - there have been several who have seen us on line and come to see.
 - we have some inquirers, catechumens, as well as new members chrismated into the faith.
- The parish is a joy to work with and willing to take on new challenges as they arise.
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Holy Transfiguration

Steubenville, OH

Rev. Andrew P. Nelko, Administrator

During the past two years we remodeled our parish home located on Alexander Manor in Steubenville which resulted in the recent sale of the house at double the purchase price back in 1980. Since there was no mortgage on the parish home, all the proceeds from the sale were deposited in our church account. The following labor was performed by our Men's Club and money for materials and some outside labor was donated by parishioners. It should be noted, there were no church funds used for these improvements.

1. Demolished an old deck and constructed a new deck.
2. Sanded and varnished hardwood floors
3. Removed and installed new carpet in the living room and hallway to the bedrooms.
4. Installed laminate flooring in dining room.
5. Installed a new electrical service.
6. Installed a new garage door.
7. Installed new ceiling tiles in the rec room.
8. Remodeled downstairs bathroom.
9. Replumbed the house
10. Painted interior of the house

During the past year our Men's Club performed the following improvements and projects at the Church with funds donated by parishioners.

1. After months of negotiations, we obtained the dilapidated house and property next to the vacant lot where our old parish home once stood adjacent to the Church. The Jefferson County Landbank demolished the house and deeded the property to the Church for the price of \$225. A parishioner donated the purchase price.
2. We have continued to grade the newly acquired property.
3. We remodeled the women's bathroom in the Church Hall.
4. The ceiling tiles were replaced and new LED lighting was installed in the Church Hall.
5. Painted and repointed the outside steps and block walls.
6. Remodeled the handicap ramp.
7. Landscaped the 10th Street side of the Church.
8. Installed a new hot water tank in the Church Hall.
9. Installed new carpet in the middle of the Church.
10. We replaced the heating and cooling system using funds from our Church account.

Two of our parishioners have donated a percentage of their monthly oil and gas revenue which the Church expects to start receiving at the end of the year. It is estimated these monthly revenues will cover the

Church's monthly expenses. We are blessed and want to congratulate our parishioner Father Deacon Mark Vukelic who was recently ordained into the Holy Diaconate. Axios!

Finally, we are so blessed to have Father Paul Suda drive down from the Pittsburgh area every Sunday for the past five years. His weekly presence inspires our small congregation to keep our "little Church on the hill" alive and relevant.

Holy Trinity

New Salem, Pa

V. Rev. Vitaly Dudkin, Rector

No Report

Holy Trinity

Charleroi

V. Rev. Gregory Peterson, Rector

No Report

Nativity of the Virgin Mary

Monongahela, PA

Rev. Andrew P. Nelko, Administrator

Pdn. David Rostcheck, Attached

Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church has continued to celebrate weekly Sunday services this past year supported by various members of the clergy. Our sincere thanks to V. Rev. Samuel Smolcic, V. Rev. Michael Sochka, and V. Rev. David Vernak of our own Archdiocese and V. Rev. Robert Prepelka of the Carpatho-Russian Diocese for coming to celebrate the Divine Liturgy for our parish. We also thank our Dean, Rev. Andrew Nelko, for his support in scheduling the visiting clergy for us every month. And a special thank you to Father Stephan Gresh who always has made himself available to the various needs of our parishioners, such as visiting those hospitalized, hearing our confessions, and celebrating the Divine Liturgy for our parish's feast day, among the many other ways he helps us out.

During the past year our parish, though small in numbers, continues to strive to make a difference both locally and at a greater distance by supporting various organizations and institutions. We make monthly contributions to IOCC and the Greater Washington County Food Bank. We also have made donations to the appeals of St. Tikhon's and Saint Vladimir's Seminaries, the Diocese of Alaska, St. Tikhon's Monastery, the Monastery of the Transfiguration, Orthodox Christian Prison Ministries, Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern PA, a fund for local merchants whose businesses were flooded by a water main break, a fund for a local family whose home was destroyed by a fire, and disaster relief through the Brother's Brother Foundation for both hurricane and wildfire victims.

Our parish has lost two longtime members this past year. Larry Matus, and Tanya Lazzari who was our parish council secretary for many years. May their memories be eternal! But we have also welcomed a new family to our parish, Alexander & Angelica Scales, along with son Knox and daughter Penelope. May God grant them many years!

Ss. Cyril and Methodius

Jeanette, PA

V. Rev. Michael Senyo

See LPAP Report

St. Andrew

Mingo Junction, OH

Rev. Andrew P. Nelko, Administrator

Vacant. Fr. Kopcha fills in on Sundays

St. John the Baptist

Canonsburg

Rev. John Kotalik

Pdn. John Oleynik, Attached

Dn. Theodosius Onest, Attached

By the grace of God, St. John's in Canonsburg has continued to experience growth. Over the last year, we have received five persons into the Orthodox Church and have been blessed to have two families and three individuals move to the parish from elsewhere. We are also blessed with 28 catechumens (10 of whom are children). We have sadly served eight funerals; may the memory of all our departed parishioners be eternal! Some highlights of parish life include:

- Most weeks, we strive to have services five days per week, including Daily Vespers on Mondays and Wednesdays. After Monday Vespers (outside of the fasts), we head down the road to Primanti's for Wing Night, and we have Orthodoxy 101 after Wednesday Vespers.
- Fr. John and Mat. Janine continue to host the faithful for dinner at their home most Saturday evenings after Vespers, as a bonfire or indoor social as weather allows. This has been especially effective at helping to welcome young adults into the parish.
- Once per month, one of our parishioners organizes a board game night after Friday Vespers. This has helped to build connections with those from other nearby parishes.
- Our Men's Club is working to revitalize itself. Working in five times of four men, it has taken over the cleaning of the church and hall, saving our parish nearly \$10,000 in janitorial services in the last year. It has also re-imagined our annual golf fundraiser as a golf social for our parish men.
- Our Ladies' Altar Society introduced a new idea this year: gathering together at a local farm to pick flowers on the Sunday before Dormition, so that these can be blessed on the feast.
- Parishioner Emmanuel Maginas was ordained to the Holy Diaconate in the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh. He had been leading our Matins readers and choir, but some parishioners have stepped up to allow us to continue our Sunday morning Matins services.
- Long-time attached Dn. Theodosius Onest was elevated to the Protodiaconate on Sept. 24. Many years!

Beyond the walls of the parish, we have struggled to witness to Christ and serve our community:

- We continue to offer our Metropolitan Theodosius Memorial Lecture series on a not-quite-monthly basis. We look forward to welcoming Dr. Edith Humphrey as our next speaker.
- Each year, we participate in Canonsburg's Old-Fashioned Christmas Celebration by setting up a warming station and providing free hot cocoa on behalf of the borough.
- We have begun to develop an Orthodox Christians for Life chapter, which supports both Pittsburgh's Women's Choice Network and Genesis of Pittsburgh's location in Washington. We also had a "baby shower" on the Sunday following the Annunciation in order to collect diapers, wipes, baby formula, and other items which are needed by those in crises pregnancies.
- For the third year, we have a parish booth at Canonsburg's Oktoberfest the Houston Pumpkin Festival in the fall. So far, this has brought five people into the parish, and been a wonderful witness to the Faith.
- After a COVID-related hiatus, we have resumed our Pancake Breakfast fundraiser, held in our parish hall, in conjunction with the Pumpkin Festival, in order to open our doors to the community and raise funds for a worthy cause. This year, all proceeds went to support the first responders of our community.

We continue to search for a choir director to lead and teach our choir, thus beautifying our divine services. We offer \$1,000/month. If anyone in the archdiocese knows of someone able and interested, please contact Fr. John at frjohnkotalik@gmail.com.

St. John the Divine

Monessen, PA

Rev. Andrew P. Nelko, Administrator

Vacant. Currently serviced 1-2 times a month by Fr. Constantine Curchin.

St. Nicholas

Weirton, WV

Rev. Andrew Nelko, Rector

Dn. Mark Vukelic, Attached

St. Nicholas in Weirton has had a busy past year with a lot of good things going on. This past year we were blessed to bring three catechumens into the faith on Lazarus Saturday and currently have another six who will be received in the next couple months. We also had two funerals last year from faithful who no longer lived in the area. For the first time in many years, our average attendance on Sundays has been over 50 persons, and we have been blessed to have more visitors attending each week.

Liturgically, we continue to have a normal schedule of services with Liturgy on Sundays and Feast Days as well as Great Vespers/Vigil on the eves of those days. We also have Daily Vespers every Wednesday. We recently started a continual, bi-monthly Bible Study this summer. As we have done for the past several years we continue to have a bi-annual, four week adult class in the spring and fall on various topics. We also have catechumen classes every other week.

As a parish, we have worked to have a bigger impact on the community, with our annual First Responder Service, making bags and having a clothing drive for less fortunate, monetary donations to local organizations, among other events. We continue to look for more ideas on how we can be a bigger impact in the community of Weirton.

As the building is now over 50 years old, renovations, upkeep, and beautifying projects have been a focal point this year. Just this past year we had our parking lot repaved, steps at the parish and rectory redone, electrical work and breaker boxes repaired, new AC units for the hall installed, as well as new flooring and seating in our hall and temple that is scheduled to be completed later this month. We continue to look at future

beautifying projects and maintenance that may be needed in the next several years such as an addition to the rectory and a new roof on the church.

We joyfully announce that on Pentecost, Dn. Mark Vukelic was ordained to the Deaconate and assigned to our parish and alternates between serving in Steubenville and with us. Dr. John Schultz has completed his DVP program and awaits for the Synod meeting this fall to approve his ordination to the Deaconate next month.

St. Nicholas

Donora, PA

Rev. Andrew P. Nelko, Administrator

Pdn. Robert Motichak

Vacant. Serviced by Fr. Curchin and other clergy.