



# THE BASIL LEAF

## St. Basil The Great Orthodox Church

### In this issue:

- Parish Happenings
- Spiritual Maturity: Communal and Personal
- Sacrament Report, p.3
- Construction update, p.4
- Dates to Remember, p.4

## Parish Happenings: The Fall In Review

The fall has come and gone! Before we enter deep into winter let's take a look back at the last few months. A lot has happened.

To start off, the parish ministry teams have been busy. The Antiochian Women elected Melissa Edens as their President, Ysidora Jones is serving as the Secretary, and Beth Johnson as Treasurer. In addition to their social events and fundraising efforts (continued on p. 2)

## Spiritual Maturity: Communal and Personal

Fr. James Purdie

My brother Andrew's birthday is Dec. 23. As a kid I used to think that was so cool because, not only did he get birthday presents, but two days later he'd also get Christmas presents. I confess, I'd be a little jealous of his two day hull of gifts. Not particularly mature of me, but I was a child after all. Well, one time I got to experience the two-day gift extravaganza that my brother got every year. (Continued on p. 3)

**Do you really want to grow spiritually? Here is the recipe: Humble yourself, fall down at the feet of a spiritual father and confess your sins, including your pride and arrogance. It is guaranteed, you will walk away a "new man," renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit. That will be a leap in spiritual growth. You will know it in your heart.**

## Celebration Weekend

The entire fall, it could be argued, was one big build up toward our celebration weekend Nov. 17-19th. Our workers, clean-up crews, and food providers labored to make our Church ready for Bp. THOMAS' visit, our celebration banquet, and the ordination of Christopher Mertens to the Holy Diaconate. And it was amazing! First, the Church was carpeted, pews went in, and paint was put on the walls. It looks fantastic. The celebration weekend has really marked the St. Basil's coming into maturity as a parish. Now begins the next step: deepening our spiritual lives and bringing people into Orthodoxy. (Continued on p. 3)



With the towel on his head, Dn. Christopher awaits his ordination while Bp. THOMAS blesses the congregation. Photo by Catherine Fisher.

**Parish Happenings...**the Women have begun a “Secret Sister” exchange by which they give a small gift, anonymously, to their assigned sister and pray specifically for them. When the exchange period has ended they reveal to each other who their secret sister is. It’s a fun way to build relationships and group cohesion.

Missions & Evangelism, led by James Crawford, completed another round of “Becoming Truly Human.” This time they did the program on three consecutive Wednesdays. The group is now working on preparing us for February’s Sacred Arts Festival.

On the heels of “Becoming Truly Human” we added a Wednesday night Compline service and Bible Study at 7:30pm. Compline is 20min. and the Bible Study is about a 1/2 hour. This is a perfect, low-key, time to invite others to the parish and be introduced to Orthodoxy.

Our annual Stewardship drive began in September and is now wrapping up. Terry Slezak and the Stewardship team distributed tithe cards, and are still accepting them. Tithe cards are your commitment to God and the parish. Of course, giving includes our finances, but stewardship is more than money. We also are called to be stewards of our time, helping the parish by offering our various gifts. Our parish ministry organizations offer opportunities to bless the parish with our presence, input, expertise, and talents. Please return your tithe card by Dec. 10th for our annual Parish Meeting. Please turn them in to be eligible to vote at the Parish Meeting, and to serve on Parish Council.

Mark Nixon continues to work with our Youth Group. In October he and the kids gathered at the Eden’s house for fellowship, a bonfire, and pumpkin carving. It is important that the kids have as many faithful adults in their lives to serve as Christian examples, guides, and leaders who can answer their questions, and show them the spiritual path.

On a related note, the Sunday School program continues to excel. The children’s participation and the teachers’ dedication have been excellent. We are now looking forward to their Nativity Play (Dec. 17th)- “A Charlie Brown Christmas.”

The Girls Guild continues their ministry as well. A new calendar will be posted soon, and it is a good time for your girls to join up. See Kh. Kelly, or Rebecca Simerick for details.

On the last two Mondays of Oct. Fr. James held a class at the Poquoson library on the “First 1000 yrs. of Christianity.” This was a very successful class! Thank you for your support.

Most recently, Bill Black visited our Church. Bill is a missionary in Kenya through OCMC (Orthodox Christian Mission Center). He spoke to us about the culture, faith, and struggles of Kenyans in general, and the Orthodox there specifically. We are thankful for his hard work and witness. Supporting him is a blessing. Is God calling you, or your family to missionary service? See Fr. James for more information and assistance in discerning the possibility.

Finally, we would be remiss were we not to mention the fundraiser we held at Warwick Forest Retirement Community. The spread laid out for brunch was delicious and impressive. The auctions and entire event were incredibly successful. St. Basil raised \$3000! Thank you to Kh. Kelly Purdie and her crew for such a wonderful job well done.



Above: Some of the Youth Group Boys pose for the camera.

Below: Abigail Elias (L) and Genevieve



L to R: Ysidora Jones waves to the camera, Sharon Zgoda, Ray Zgoda. The event fulfilled our dedication to have thoughtful fundraisers that maximize the return on our efforts, and incorporate the larger community to ease the

## Celebration Weekend...

A heartfelt thank you to Chuck Simerick, his core crew, and all those who worked so hard on the building. A big thank you also to Rhonda Mertens, Larissa Fritts, and company who planned and executed a flawless banquet with delicious food, and a perfect program at that Friday's banquet. That Sunday, after ordaining Deacon Christopher Mertens, Bp. THOMAS blessed the entire Church complex as an added bonus. His grace was most impressed with our progress and hard work, but challenged us to do even more. The weekend was the culmination of over three years of construction, but more so it was the culmination of all the work that started back in 1996 at the founding of our parish.



## Spiritual Maturity: Communal and Personal...

You see, my birthday, June 23, was just after my high school graduation. Gifts for graduating and turning 18! How do you like me now Andrew!?! I know, not very mature, but hey, I was a kid (I would later be taken down a peg or two when after having to endure an eleven hour Greyhound bus ride home for Thanksgiving break I saw how mom and dad had gotten Andrew a truck!). Anyway, my parents gave me a watch as a gift for those two occasions. A nice watch, a mature adult watch. It was a gift appropriate for such mile stones.

That's what we do. When a person reaches certain mile stones, or levels of maturity we give appropriate gifts and celebrate with certain rites of passage. But notice, the maturity comes first, and then the gift is given, or then the rite of passage is preformed. You've heard me mention how our celebration weekend this past November marked the maturity of our parish. The celebration was the gift, the rite of passage, but the maturity came first.

Personal maturity, I am speaking in worldly terms, often comes without effort. You turn sixteen and you can drive (the gift). You turn eighteen and you vote (the rite of passage). You turn twenty-one and you can drink (the result). These mile stones don't require effort. They are the achievement of biology and laws created before we were even a twinkle in our parents eye. But real maturity takes work.

One's personal spiritual maturity is a laborious effort with the grace of God. It necessitates, prayer, fasting, confession, attending the Divine Services, reading scripture, and practicing the virtues. In short, the effort consists in dying to oneself. Spiritual maturity doesn't happen on it's own, but like worldly coming of age events, it does result in the giving of gifts. The Holy Spirit grants gifts to the mature Christian for the edification of the Church. These include, wisdom, knowledge, faith, the working of miracles, prophecy, discernment of spirits, different kinds of tongues, interpretation of tongues, and the greatest of gifts- love (see I Corinthians 12-13). These gifts are much better than a shiny new watch, and are granted when we've matured to the point where we won't gloat in our brother's face.

Now there is also a communal maturity; a spiritual maturity exhibited by a group of faithful Christians. In this case, our parish, St. Basil. How did we reach such a maturity? Simple. We prayed and fasted as a people. We lived repentantly as a people. We increased the number of Divine Services, and we attended them. We listened to the scriptures and lives of the saints as a Church. And as the Body of Christ, we struggled to practice the virtues. We died to ourselves, so that we might live to God. And how has the Holy Spirit rewarded us? He has seen us through our building project, indeed He gave us the building. He saw us through difficult times. He increased our numbers. But like any gift, these new gifts must be used for the building up of the Church. They cannot be shelved, or wasted. We must use them. The building must be used for the glory of God and the salvation of His people in Hampton Roads. Our increased membership must engage in acts of ministry that shine the light of our faith to the world. And the ease we are beginning to experience as a parish must not become an opportunity to eat, drink, and be merry, but instead be the occasion by which we reach out and do even more with what God has given us.

Yes, we have come into our own as a parish. God has given us much. Now, as a Church, we look again to discern the will of God for St. Basil in the next chapter in our spiritual development.

### Sacrament Report

10/9/17 Baptism of David Bruce

10/29/17 Crowning (Marriage) of Chris & Rhonda Mertens

11/12/17 Baptism of Phia DiGiosaffatte

11/19/17 Ordination of Christopher Mertens to the Holy Diaconate

## Building Construction Update

The fall season was incredibly successful! The finished work looks fantastic. The tile, carpet and pews, and the woodwork are first rate. Currently, the construction of the bookstore is being completed, and then it's on to the woman's bathroom and more detail work throughout. Meanwhile, Jeff Edens continues his preparations for the Platytera icon to be installed on the sanctuary dome, as well as the other icons.

Since the pressure is off construction wise, we are able to relax a bit. Please see Chuck Simerick for specific days and times when you can help out. Of course, Saturday mornings remain primary work period. The clean up crew schedule also remains the same.

## Dates to Remember

**Compline & Bible Study, Wednesdays 7:30pm,  
Great Vespers, Saturdays 6:30 PM. Matins, Sundays, 9:25 AM.  
Divine Liturgy, Sundays, 10:30 AM.  
Sunday School & Adult Ed, Sundays following Liturgy.**

### Dec.

- 1 Advent Paraklysis, 6:30pm
- 2 St. Nicholas Children's Celebration, 5pm
- 3 Parish Council Meeting, 12:30pm
- 5 Bible Study, 11am in Poquoson
- 8 Advent Paraklysis, 6:30pm
- 10 Annual Parish Meeting, during fellowship hour
- 12 Bible Study, 11am in Poquoson
- 15 Advent Paraklysis, 6:30pm
- 17 Children's Nativity Play, immediately after liturgy  
PORT (Feeding the Homeless), 6pm @ Sts. Constantine & Helen, NN
- 19 Bible Study, 11am in Poquoson
- 22 Royal Hours, 9am
- 24 Regular Sunday morning services. Plus...  
...Orthros for The Holy Nativity of Christ, 8pm  
...Liturgy for The Holy Nativity of Christ, 9pm
- 25 Feast of the Holy Nativity of Christ (no morning services)
- 27 No evening Compline & Bible Study
- 31 Vespers for Feast of St. Basil and Circumcision of Christ, 6:30pm

### Jan.

- 1 Orthros for the Feast of St. Basil and Circumcision of Christ, 9am  
Liturgy for the Feast of St. Basil and Circumcision of Christ, 10am  
Sharing of Vasilopita (St. Basil Bread), following Liturgy
- 5 Royal Hours for the Feast of Theophany, 9am  
Orthros for the Feast of Theophany, 5:30pm  
Liturgy for the Feast of Theophany & Blessing of Waters, 6:30pm
- 7 Parish Council Meeting, 12:30pm
- 21 Baptism of Garland Harris & Misty Nibecker, and children, after coffee hour
- 27 Wedding of Garland Harris & Misty Nibecker, 1pm