



**ST MICHAEL'S ORTHODOX CHURCH
DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA
& EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
512 SUMMER ST
OLD FORGE, PA 18518**



ANNUAL RECTOR'S REPORT - REV MICHAEL SHEPHERD February 1, 2024

Baptisms: 1	Parish Census Fiscal Yr. 2023
Chrismations: 4	45 Active Members (91 total, incl. children (14))
Marriages: 0	
Deaths: 8	

Glory to Jesus Christ. Glory Forever.

I will try hard not to repeat some of the events or points of discussion that the Parish Council will brief you. Since our last annual meeting, we have had one baptism (Nadezha Hart), and four Chrismations (Joseph, Emilia, Silas, & Judah Hart). We also had several parishioners and/or former parishioners who passed away (Evelyn Krenitsky Bunevitch, Alexander Horek, Martha Krenitsky Matechak, Helen Bezuhly, Lydia Popov, Marie Buranich, Alexander Pritchuk, John Miseyko,). We hold a panikhida on the last Saturday of every month in honor of those who have passed during that month. May their memory be eternal.

2023 has been a whirlwind and in the words of Danny Pregmon, "Never a dull Moment!" The church has been blessed with the return of Kelly Flannery and Maura Elko as members of our Parish. We also currently have three catechumens Jason Vo, Santo Cerminaro, & Mikayla Brown who have been faithfully attending almost every scheduled service and attending catechumen classes every Saturday prior to vespers for the past several months. We are also blessed with several inquirers and seekers who are at our services and I continue to have dialogue with them. Glory to God!

As the church of St Michaels is our home parish and God's Holy Temple, it should be taken care of by all of its people. Every Friday is a work Friday so that you may use your time and talent to help clean and organize God's temple. Danny Pregmon has worked diligently over the past year to maintain all of our buildings. Sandy Pregmon has assisted me with going through all of the documents that have been stored in the church and disposing of the documents no longer needed but ensuring we also keep the historical and important documents for continuity. Sandy has also been cleaning the church on a weekly basis along with Beverly Elko who has assisted several times with cleaning and maintaining some of our vestments. Our Cemetery Custodian has been filled by Danny Pregmon and I am grateful for his continued dedication to this vital ministry of the church. Marie Pasternak, has continued the important service of decorating our beautiful temple with flowers during our feast days. We have had wonderful support in ensuring our fiduciary requirements are met when counting the offerings. Thank you to Patty Jones, Marie Pasternak, Emily Krenitsky, Tammy Wytovich, Jason & Emily Hart, and Bernard Elko who assisted in counting. Thank you to Sandy Pregmon and Beverly Elko for their meticulous auditing of our accounts.

Our ministries are coming along. We are beginning to start our Youth Ministry. Thank you to Natasha Coyoy who volunteered to start the Heavenly Host Program and to Jason Hart who will begin doing youth activities this year. Thank you to Barbara Sevensky, Maria Pasternak, Matushka Emilia Shepherd & Emily Hart for their dedication in singing in the choir. It is our prayer that we will have a choir director in the near future. We have beautiful voices who sing in the choir. We just need someone to direct them. God will answer our

prayers at the right time. And it seems that He has! We have two people taking the OCA sight reading and directing course. Our youth are also taking services in the church very seriously. We have Savina Shepherd and Nadezdha Hart as our handmaidens who serve zapifka after communion and our young men Blaise, Maximus, & Rodion Shepherd along with Judah & Silas Hart have been serving in the altar. Thank God!

Our Prosphora (name given to the loaves of bread offered during Divine Liturgy in the Orthodox Church and as stated in the prayer of proskomede "As Thou art good and the Lover of mankind, remember those that offer it, and those for whose sake it was offered") baking ministry has come a long way. Also, Proskomede means "to offer" or "to bring" in Greek. The prosphora is an offering from the people for the people and one of the many ways we hold true to "Grant O Lord a Peaceful and Prosperous life" or "May their Memory to be Eternal" as I take out particles for the living, the dead, our bishop, ours saints, and the entire congregation of the Orthodox Church. Thank you to Emily Hart, Maura Elko Marie Pasternak, Matushka Emilia Shepherd, Emily Krentisky, Sandy Pregmon, Amaya Kane, & Tammy Wytovich who have helped bake prosphora this year. I hope that this vital ministry of an offering of oneself to God and his people will continue to grow. Please sign up!

We had one outreach ministry this year which was our Veterans Day Pasta Meal which was a wonderful gathering of people from several parishes and our local community. Planning has already begun for next year and we are also planning a St Nicholas Day Festival for next year. I had an appreciation day for the parish in which I cooked, yes - I cooked hamburgers and hotdogs. Thank you to all who attended that and I will have another one in the spring.

We have had some private donations to the church for brand new vestments, painting of the cupolas, new carpet, painting of the ceilings, etc. Glory to God. It is our hope that we start these projects late spring early summer.

As we continue to grow, I want to emphasize one thing. I would like for everyone to join in and rejoice at the growth of St Michaels. Glory to God. At the same time, I do not want anyone to feel as they are being left behind or being left out of the Church. However, as I have said in past sermons, we ALL must actively participate in the will of God. To foster a relationship, it takes two. I am always here for any of the parishioners of St Michaels or for any of God's people but I will not impose myself on anybody nor would I want anyone to impose themselves onto me. I am always open to an invitation for a visit but I will not show up randomly at anyone's home out of the blue. That could cause embarrassment upon some people and that is the last thing I want to do.

I would like to thank the Parish Council who has worked so hard to ensure that whatever happens in the Church, that we foster a community of love and respect. It has been truly remarkable to see the dedication this council has to the Church and the Great Commission to "make disciples of all nations, baptize and teach them to observe all things that Jesus has taught them." Thank you to Tammy Wytovich, Danny Pregmon, Vitaliy Rakovsky, and Maura Elko for your contribution to the church. Your recommendations, words of encouragement, and dedication to the Church have made my role as rector and priest here at St Michaels easier. Thank you to my family who not only supports me in my priestly ministry but also endures, prays, and rejoices in the Lord's vineyard.

I am excited and blessed to be here. Let's see what God has in store for us this year!

In Christ,

Fr. Michael Shepherd