

NEWSLETTER OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2010 ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH



Church Directory

Parish Priest

Rev. Barnabas Fravel, 442-2669

Pastor Emeritus

V. Rev. Josef Petranin, 442-2016

Parish President

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Treasurer | Financial Planning

Emilie Goudey, 637-2109

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Pat Davis, 442-3513

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Barbara Parhizgar

Property Manager

Nicholas Bobrovsky, 448-8330

Member at Large

Tanya Bogaevskaya, 443-4630
Danton Papurkov, 499-1530

from Fr. Barnabas

'He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net... And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." (Luke 5:1-11)

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,, these words are more meaningful to us than ever before. As a community of Orthodox Christians in Berkshire County Massachusetts, we have launched out into the deep. And our Goal, our mission, our purpose for launching out into the deep is to catch all of the men, women, and children of this area who are in need of the Savior. Our mission is to do as our Lord commands and "Baptize all nations," and as a community we have made a bold step, we have purchased new property in the hopes of building a new church that will not only take care of our pressing needs as a parish but also accommodate those who will come.

Launching out into the deep, making such steps as we have takes courage. It takes courage and faith to launch out into the unknown. It also takes trust; trust that our Lord will be faithful to us as well. This makes the Gospel lesson from Luke Ch. 5 mean more to us now than ever before. It is our story too!

Let's look at the beautiful commentary by St. John Chrysostom on Luke Ch. 5:

"But if you should say, 'the promise is very great,' I greatly admire them even for this, for when they had seen nothing yet, they believed in so great a reach of promise, and accounted all only secondary to that attendance. And all this, because they believed that by the very words with which they were caught, they would be able to catch others also... And you see how with exactness he intimates their poverty to us as well, in that He found them sewing up their nets... When He had therefore caught them, then He began in their presence to work miracles: by His deeds confirming the words of John concerning Him. And He was continually frequenting their synagogues, even by this instructing them that He was not a sort of adversary of God and deceiver, but that He had come in accordance with the Fathers."

(St. John Chrysostom Homily IV, 3, 4. on Matthew)



A beautiful apple tree spreads its arms over our new land

This is **Our Story!** Let's break this commentary down a bit in order to see how it relates to us and in many ways gives us our direction. **Firstly**, "They had seen nothing, yet they believed in so great a reach of promise." What a great promise our Lord offers. Yet the disciples worked all night and they hadn't caught a thing. Our Lord tells them once again to **launch out into the deep** and let down their nets. Yes, they question it. They say, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing;" Isn't this our question at times too when it comes to our Lord's work? Especially for those who have worked and struggled



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Father Barnabas (continued)

for so many years? Yet as St. John Chrysostom says, that even though they had fished all night and didn't catch anything, even though they had "seen nothing," they did as the Lord asked. "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net."



Secondly, St. John the point out that the Apostles, "...accounted all only secondary to that attendance." In other words, they didn't say, we will do it tomorrow, or next week, or next year, or the next generation, or someone else should do it, not me, no! They took the responsibility themselves without any foreknowledge as to what was going to happen to them. They didn't know, yet they believed in the promise; they did as our Lord asked and launched out, let down their nets without any delay. And they would grow in their attendance to our Lord's words. Serving our Lord and making His work first, above everything else in this world, would be something that would reach even greater levels with them. And we know as time goes on that eventually they would attend to nothing but the Lord's work. Each step of the way they became more and more fervent in their attendance, eventually the ultimate attendance came when their own lives became secondary to the Lord's work. We see this clearly in their martyrdom.

Thirdly, "They believed that by the very words they were caught, they would be able to catch others..." How is it that we have come to believe? Isn't it because we have been touched or moved by our Lord's words? Isn't it because we too have experienced a personal encounter with Christ that has brought us literally to our knees? Hasn't He moved us? Or perhaps it is the example of a saint or a saintly person, who shared with us, by example, the blessings of Christ? Yes! In the same way, our Lord is working on others too, touching their lives bringing them along, just like us. Perhaps he has placed us in their midst as that "saintly" example, moving their hearts and minds to Him through us. In the same way in which somehow, by God's grace we have come to know Him and His Holy Church, so too will others. By the same words in which we were caught, we will be able to catch others. And it is up to us to do it!

Fourthly, "see how with exactness he intimates their poverty..." When does our Lord call them? He calls them as they are sewing up their nets. They were poor, uneducated. They were not theologians, they were not rich they had no money to buy new nets, in fact they were poor, simple, unperfected (sinners); this is shown by the fact that they were sewing or mending their nets when he called them. Did

they feel prepared? I am sure they didn't, but when our Lord calls us, whether we feel we are ready or not, we must respond. Yes, they questioned at first the calling but in the end because these dumb fishermen answered this call by acting, by listening, by following, these fishermen changed the entire world. Our Lord used their weakness, as St. Paul tells us, God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. But we must do something, whether we feel ready or not. God is calling, and in our weakness He will use us to bring others, just like He has brought us.

Finally, "When He had therefore caught them, then He began in their presence to work miracles...and He was continually frequenting their synagogues, instructing them..." Once we have been "caught," once we have believed His words to be Truth, the natural response is action. "Faith without works is dead..." says the apostle James, "even the demons believe and tremble."

Once we have been caught we must act and follow. Believe in the promise and follow Him, accounting everything else in this world and in this life as secondary to attending to God's work. If we make this step, our Lord will begin to use us. Even in our brokenness, He will begin to use us to work miracles. And this is a great gift, a great calling.

But this gift is not given to us alone; it is not given to us that we should hug it, possess it, delight in it; it is given to us in the way in which a candle is lit, in which a fire is lighted,

in which the truth is given. My brothers and sisters in Christ, thank God we have not been a body of people who are prisoners of our buildings or prisoners of our small frail tight knit Pittsfield Orthodox Church! Because we are indeed sent into the world to be God's own witnesses, holding nothing back, and through His precious Body and Blood we are to be His incarnate presence to all we encounter in Berkshire County. Our Lord has arranged our small community with people from all different walks of life, from all different countries and backgrounds; somehow He has untied us all here in tiny Pittsfield, MA in 2010. When we come to St. Nicholas Orthodox Church and when we offer up our prayers, when we receive Holy Communion don't we expect all things from God? Well, He also expects all things from us too!

Let us truly meditate upon this. Let us receive with an open heart and an open mind, with all our being, what God gives us, not in order to possess it but in order to give it, to give it as generously as God gives Himself. Whether it is life, death, joy, sorrow, broken-heartedness, hopes, dreams, whatever it may be, may we be a people who are willing to give all in God's Name to anyone who is in need. If we continue to do this my brothers and sisters, then we shall have fulfilled the Apostle's call, truly being fishers of men. If we continue to do this, we will surely begin to see that indeed His work is easy and His burden is light.

*With Love in Christ,
Fr. Barnabas*

From our Parish Council President

"A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not find it, But knowledge is easy to him who understands." (Proverbs 14:6)

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We are joyful, even though change may make us nervous. We become a bit anxious when life tosses us a new beach ball! Politicians run on platforms of change, but when we anticipate a change in circumstance close to home we may want to backslide and stammer. Our Orthodox heritage prides itself on an unbroken continuity of tradition. Where is the "but" in this letter going?

As a parish St. Nicholas has survived over 90 years in the same place. But as the parish began to grow and evolve over the past five years, we came to the consensus that we had "outgrown" our current place of worship. Intellectually we agreed that we needed:

- a larger worship space
- more Sunday School classrooms
- a bigger, professional kitchen
- a place to hold regular fundraisers
- ample parking
- handicapped access

On September 30 we closed on a beautiful piece of property and a 2,800 sq. ft. building at 1304 North Street in Pittsfield, after an energetic search about the county. We could have stayed in our current location for another 90 years. We could have maintained the status quo and sent a message to visitors and potential new members that this community likes its quaint ethnic identity. Come if you wish, but if there is not enough worship space, or your children are crowded in their Sunday School classes, or we can't host mission events or fundraisers, or adding handicapped access is too expensive --- well, sorry, but we like things the way they are. We could have sent a message that **maintaining** what we have, socking away savings for a rainy day, and "staying the course" is enough.

But it isn't enough and instead we acted boldly and with a positive vote among Parish members. Christ did not set an example of dynamic ministry, and die for his actions, so that we might simply never have to feel the discomfort of imitating him. St. Paul did not run around Greece, Rome and the Middle East exhorting Christian communities to baptize all nations so that we could sit back and wait for him to knock at the door. If what we wanted was simply to come to church on Sundays, sit passively in pews, observe the drama in the altar without participating in the Liturgy, then we would have dug in our heels and resisted expanding our church, our mission, and our spiritual lives.

I think the majority of communicants at St. Nicholas really want to present a high-visibility Orthodox presence in Berkshire County. The majority have spoken with their hearts and urged the Parish Council and the community at large to do what it takes to create a dynamic presence that is steeped in beauty, an Orthodox spiritual space,

respect for future generations, and room to expand as our mission grows. From this place in my own heart I ask that all of us, myself included, do whatever we can to continue to move forward. **Theosis**, striving to become like Christ, means sacrifice, some pain, much faith, and a commitment to work together through the months ahead. If we do this we will emerge as the most dynamic Orthodox presence around.

I would like to personally thank Fr. Josef for his enduring years of faith that this day would indeed come, and to Fr. Barnabas (and his family) for putting their energy and belief behind our new adventure. I recently received a beautiful note from a parishioner I came to know in Colonie, NY at the Nativity of Mother of God Russian Orthodox Church, where Fr. Theodore Jurewicz is working on their iconography and frescos. Richard, a reader/chanter, and one of our leaders of his parish somehow heard about our new property and wrote to send blessings that we continue to flourish. News travels fast!

*With respect, Irene Vassos
Parish Council President*

Scenes from our new property



Touched by the “Hi” Brush

Irene Vassos (Part 8)

Sometimes grace descends upon us without our knowledge, or our permission, or in spite of our pushing it away. Three weeks ago, young Alex, who was baptized at St. Nicholas and whom we think harbors some residual fears from his baptism (don't we all! - baptism is scary!) came to church



with his father, Gleb, to begin the new church school year. He was frightened, sobbed at each new sound and sight, and crouched behind his dad's protection.

Three things happened. Tanya noticed his fear and quietly walked to the back and took several children's books from a pile, handing them to Alex, then walked back to her singing. Alex calmed a bit.

Then young Matthew, with his usual power of charm for anyone smaller and younger, took Alex a stash of toys and quietly engaged him in a bit of play. We believe that children need to be in church **often**, whether they fuss or explore -- Chloe has taken exploration during Liturgy to a new dimension. If they are to feel this as a **Home**, then we are called to tolerate a bit of noise and activity. This is the basis of Orthodox liturgics anyway -- movement, sound and drama.

Alex wanted none of the after-Liturgy blessing of the church school students. The other children gathered around the icon table while Fr. Barnabas read prayers for their learning and understanding and for their dedicated teachers. Alex played quietly with a truck in the last pew.

Afterwards Fr. Barnabas walked to the back of the church with his Holy Water brush, waved it slowly up and down in front of Alex and said “Hello Alex, this is my ‘Hi’ brush”. Alex looked up, smiled, put his head back down, and Fr. Barnabas in one fluid movement gently touched the top of Alex's head and returned to the Altar.

How often have we been nourished or comforted with a spiritual gift that was uninvited? Grace does not ask permission. It rains upon us like the Holy Water of the “Hi brush”. This recent icon by the hand of contemporary iconographer Matthew Garrett, called the **Glykophilousa Mother of God**, shows the Theotokos cradling her Son with sweet tenderness. She did not ask for him to be born, yet she said

Yes to Gabriel at the Annunciation. The Grace of the Holy Spirit embraced her, as she embraces Christ in this beautiful icon.



If we really think about it, all Grace is uninvited. Our will does not determine when it will visit us, nor does our good work, nor our prayers, nor our desire for it. But we recognize Grace in others, and we even ask those who radiate Divine Grace to help us receive it. One of most beautiful examples is in the Troparion to St. John Chrysostom:

Grace shining forth from your lips like a beacon has enlightened the universe.

It has shown to the world the riches of poverty; it has revealed to us the heights of humility.

Teaching us by your words, O Father John Chrysostom, intercede before the Word, Christ our God, to save our souls!

Christ's **Descent into Hades** is the most dramatic example of unexpected Grace in all of Orthodox teaching. We have adopted this as **the** image of the Resurrection; unlike Western tradition, where Christ is depicted as rising into the firmament through a film of light, our tradition flips the notion that light radiates only from above. Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev in his 2002 lecture, “Christ the Conqueror of Hell”, looks at several theological interpretations of this image and concept.



“... Cyril [of Alexandria] emphasizes the universality of the salvation given by Christ to humanity, perceiving the descent of Christ into Hades as salvific for the entire human race. He is not inclined to limit salvation to a particular part of humanity...Salvation is likened to rain sent by God on both the just and the unjust.”

In other words, Grace visits us unannounced, with quiet power and with the intention of resurrecting our human souls. We are free to choose a non-convergent path, away from Christ's teaching; we can also choose to “launch out into the deep” and emerge into His light.

Brief Calendar Notes

Great Vespers:

Saturday Evenings 6:00 p.m.

Divine Liturgy:

Sundays 10:00 a.m. followed by Church School and Coffee hour

Daily Vespers and Study Group (see monthly calendar)

Wednesday Evenings at 6:30 - Study Group follows Vespers

Annual Church School Trip to Ioka Farms

Sunday October 24th, 1:00 p.m.

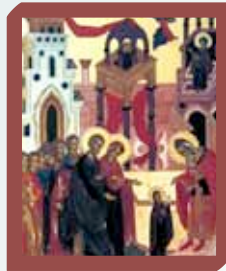
Diocese of New England's 47th Diocesan Assembly

Holy Trinity Church, Springfield, VT & Holy Resurrection Church, Claremont, NH October 29th - 30th

Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple

Great Vespers: Saturday, November 20th, 6:00 p.m.

Divine Liturgy: Sunday, November 21st, 10:00 a.m.

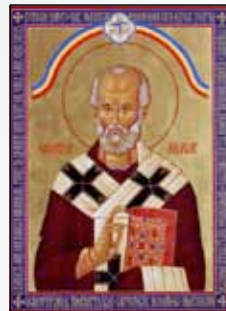


Feast Day of St. Nicholas Archbishop of Myra and Lycia

Our Patronal Feast Day December 6th

Vespers: Sunday, December 5th, 6:30 p.m.

Divine Liturgy: Monday December 6th, 9:30 a.m.



Annual St. Nicholas Day Dinner (with visit from St. Nicholas)

Sunday December 12th following Divine Liturgy

Around the Parish

HAVE YOU MISSED US?

It has been a few months since the St. Nicholas Parish Newsletter has made its way around. Over the last few months we have been plagued by printer problems that have hindered our ability to get it out. That along with all the work in acquisition of new property and more, our attention has, we must admit, been elsewhere. But here we are, hopefully back on schedule for the next year. We apologize for the delays, but certainly would be glad to hear that you missed us!

PICNIC HELD TO CELEBRATE NEW PROPERTY

On Sunday October 10th, we gathered after Liturgy for a picnic to celebrate our new property acquisition. We hope and pray that in the near future we will have His Grace Bishop Nikon with us to formally bless the property.

FUNDRAISER DINNER TO BENEFIT IOCC

Once again our Outreach and Philanthropy Ministry Group is offering a fundraising dinner to benefit the IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities). Last year The group raised nearly \$2,00 for IOCC's work in Haiti. This year's proceeds will also benefit the work of IOCC. The Dinner will be November 6th in Dalton. Tickets will be available in the next few weeks. Please mark your calendars for IOCC Charity Dinner and please make every effort to help support the work of this ministry

TRIP TO IOKA VALLEY FARMS

On Sunday October 24th our Parish Life ministry group along with our Education Ministry will once again sponsor its annual Fall trip to Ioka Valley Farm in Hancock, MA. There will be hay rides, animals, pick your own pumpkin, pumpkin sling shot, and more! All are invited, both young and old. Bring a change of clothes and hang around following church school on Oct. 24th for this parish get together. Come on out for some Fall fun and fellowship at Ioka Farms.

ANNUAL TURKEY RAFFLE

As in the past we will be having a Thanksgiving "Turkey Raffle". The raffle winner will receive a full course Thanksgiving Day dinner (everything but the cooking part). We are asking everyone to participate and even offer their help by selling a few tickets to family or friends. The tickets are \$5.00 each and the proceeds go to the church's Building Fund. Please feel free to take extra tickets. All sold tickets and proceeds should be returned to a parish council member by Nov. 21st. The drawing will take place on Sunday, November 21st during coffee hour.

STUDY GROUP IS BACK!

Our Wednesday evening Study Group is back from its summer break. We are continuing with our study of the Gospel of St. Matthew. We invite everyone to come and share in our study group; please feel free to bring your questions, comments and a friend.

NATIVITY FAST BEGINS NOVEMBER 15TH

As you know the celebration of the feast of the Nativity of Christ in the Orthodox Church is patterned after the celebration of the feast of the Lord's Resurrection (Pascha). A fast of forty days precedes the feast of the Nativity, with special preparatory days announcing the approaching birth of the Savior. The fast begins on November 15th and concludes following the Nativity of our Lord Liturgy on Christmas day. (there is an exemption in the United States on Thanksgiving Day) Fasting is a beneficial and necessary part of our spiritual life. According to St. Seraphim, fasting is an "indispensable means" of gaining the fruit of the Holy Spirit in one's life (cf. Conversation with Motovilov), and Jesus Himself taught that some forms of evil cannot be conquered without fasting, "this kind can only come out by prayer and fasting." (Matthew 17:21, Mark 9:29) **Please be aware of the upcoming fast** and be sure to use it as a time to to gain mastery over yourself, to conquer the passions of the flesh, and to liberate yourself from dependence on the things of this world in order to concentrate on the things of the Kingdom of God.



Voting at our All-Parish Meeting to Purchase a new Home!



The beauty of a Holy House resides in the hearts of its people. It can move anywhere!

Celebrations God Grant Them Many Years!

October Birthdays

- 6.....Helen Papurkov
- 8.....Tanya Bogaevskaya
- 10.....Susan Bryce
- 27.....Gleb Jerebstov
- 27.....Svetlana Postnik
- 31.....Irina Trioufanova

November Birthdays

- 3.....Tatiana Trioufanova
- 21.....Pat Davis
- 24.....Alla Breykin
- 24.....Irina Rosenblum
- 26.....Anna Jerebstov



Keep an eye out for upcoming building plans for a new church. Get involved!



INTERESTED IN SPONSORING OUR NEWSLETTER?

If you enjoy our newsletter we would like to hear from you! We are also always looking for individuals who would like to sponsor the newsletter. If you are interested please contact Fr. Barnabas at (413) 442-2669 for more detail, or write us at 76 Wahconah St., Pittsfield, MA 01201.



Annual Summer Picnic at Onota Lake



This edition of the newsletter is offered

*In memory of
William Buzek*

*beloved husband, father, and grandfather, from four generations:
Catherine, Paula, Dan, Adam and his wife Allison and son
Benjamin. (Not pictured John and his wife JoAnn)*

Catherine Buzek

P R A Y E R R E Q U E S T S

Please remember in your prayers the servants of God:

Our Bishops: His Grace Bishop Nikon, the Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America.

For the health and well being of: Bishop Nikon, Archpriest Daniel, Archpriest Theodore, Matushka Dolores, Matushka Julia, Presbyteria Susanna, Marjorie, Mary, Paul, Joseph, Olga, Svetlana, Barbara, Dennis.

For the Departed: The Departed Archmandrite Jerome, William, Constantine, Despina (12 years) and the departed founders, benefactors, brothers and sisters of St. Nicholas Church. May their memories be eternal!

Do you have a prayer request?

***Please contact Fr. Barnabas by calling the parish office at
(413) 442-2669, or write:***

St Nicholas Orthodox Church • 76 Wahconah St. • Pittsfield, MA 01201

*Blessing of our children on the
first day of church school.*



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