

Saint Mark Orthodox Church

Archdiocese of Washington DC – Orthodox Church in America

**7124 River Road
Bethesda, Maryland 20817-4770**

October 18, 2019

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our parish is at a crossroads in many respects. It is an exciting time that will present many challenges.

First, to follow up on some old business. The Council obtained a professional environmental assessment to determine if there could be any link between conditions in the choir loft and the seemingly unusual number of deaths and serious illnesses of choir members. The report came back clean. I can provide a copy to anyone who requests it. Further, on the matter of parish security, the Council is continuing to take steps to develop a program that addresses security, with the knowledge that nothing is perfect.

Now, looking to the future:

Our 50th Anniversary is approaching, and plans are being made for celebrations to mark the occasion during the 2022 calendar year. It is a wonderful accomplishment, but it also means that many of the then-young people who founded the parish are in their 80's or 90's or have already fallen asleep in the Lord. The very young from those early days are now in their 60's. This means that many long-time members are retiring and moving away. The parish leadership needs to be replaced by the younger generation. We need to continue to encourage our younger members to take an active role in the parish council and various committees.

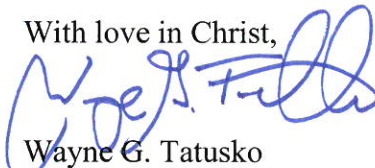
The All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America will be held in Baltimore in the summer of 2021. The initial reaction to this might be to groan and look upon this as an unwanted burden. Sadly, I admit that was my own initial reaction. Then I look back at the two All-American Councils with which I was personally involved in past years. Those were occasions to make new friendships, to renew old acquaintances, to be surrounded by a thousand fellow Orthodox Christians. Yes, there was work to be done, but it was a cooperative effort for the glory of the Lord and His Church. It is very much like our own Bazaar – there is work to be done, but the cooperative effort is fun and rewarding. The OCA will need many volunteers from St. Mark to make the Council a success. If you step forward and offer up a bit of your time and talent, you will not regret it. In addition to the preparation work, make plans to attend the Council for a day or two.

It has now been almost twenty years since our last major renovation. This is the time when mechanical systems and structural components will begin to fail and need to be repaired or replaced. At the same time, the parish has resolved to proceed with two wonderful projects – the completion of our iconography and the replacement of our pews (including new carpeting beneath the pews). Between the iconography and the pew projects, the total cost will likely be in the range of \$160,000. In the past, when the call went out for donations to support major projects, our membership demonstrated tremendous generosity and the fundraising goals were met almost effortlessly. We hope and pray for the same result in the coming year.

The costs to do major repairs or replacements are unknown. The useful life of HVAC systems such as our is about twenty years. We have received an estimate that the cost to replace our existing systems would be approximately \$350,000. While it is unlikely that our entire system will break down at once, we need to face the reality that, over the next ten years, it is reasonable to expect that large components will need to be replaced. You will see that the Parish Council is proposing an annual budget with a reserve of \$30,000 a year, beginning with the coming year, to help us to be in a position to address the situation when (and not if) it occurs. This means, of course, an increased financial commitment from the membership as a whole. You will see that the proposed budget ends in a negative number, as we included anticipated revenues in line with revenues from previous years. It is our hope that the actual revenues will be higher, as our members respond to the need. Please note that the budget does not contain any amount for the iconography project or new pews. We will need special fund raising for these two projects.

We each need to become evangelists. If each one of us could bring just one additional person in to the church over the next year – how much more vibrant we could become! We need not even leave the church building to do so. Each week it seems we are visited by someone who is inquiring about the faith, or is already Orthodox and new to the area. We each need to go outside our comfort zone, greet the new faces, make each visitor feel welcome. I know for myself that I fail at this all too often. Let us continue to make St. Mark a warm and welcoming place.

With love in Christ,



Wayne G. Tatusko
Parish Council President