St. Mark Evangelizer

Newsletter for Saint Mark Orthodox Church - 7124 River Road, Bethesda, MD 20817

Volume 21 - Number 1

January - March 2021 Issue



Saint Mark Church is a parish of the Orthodox Church in America, Archdiocese of Washington DC, under the omaphor of His Beatitude, Metropolitan, Tikhon.

Divine Liturgy: Sunday 9:30AM Weekday Feasts 10:00AM Confession: Saturday 5:00PM Vespers: Saturday 5:30PM Church School: Following Sunday Divine Liturgy (September - May) Rector: Archpriest, Gregory Safchuk Telephone: (301) 229-6300

www.saintmarkoca.org

Willing Love

Love among people is not first of all a feeling or an emotion or a sentiment but a decision of the will to be faithful to each other. . . . There are really no people whom we can love with unlimited feelings of love. We are all imperfect, broken, sinful people, but we are able to love one another because we are able to will to be faithful and constantly forgive each other...

- Henri Nouwen

God is With us!

2020 and the beginning of the new year. Soon, blessings of God the Father and the good will on the 6th. of January, our attention will be of all of the brothers and sisters in Christ. focused on the celebration of Christ's baptism in the Jordan river by the hand of St. John the Because of the continued necessity for Forerunner and Baptist. Holy tradition affirms precautions due to the Covid 19 pandemic, that Jesus needed no cleansing from sin, but our usual home blessing tradition during the by His immersion, the waters themselves are Theophany season will be curtailed. sanctified and cleansed. Those very waters However, I do encourage you to procure some which enveloped him represent the fullness of the blessed water from church following

of material creation, which were corrupted when Adam and Eve were expelled from the paradise of God's immediate presence. is being What celebrated in this glorious feast is the initial restoration of God's creation. He who was in the beginning with God and through whom all things were made, the incarnate Word of

submits Himself to the Old Covenental Law the past. by circumcision, and restores fallen nature by His baptism. Thus we understand the three feasts known as the "Winter Pascha".

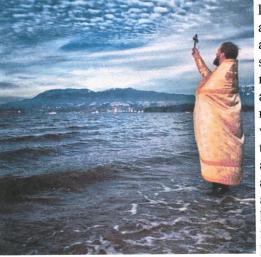
It is no wonder then that the celebration of the feast includes the great blessing of water, its distribution to the faithful and the blessing of their homes. According to the Orthodox Faith, the family is considered to be a "small church," and the family table is the "home altar" where the people gather each day to receive their "daily bread". Thus normally during the season of Theophany, the priest, who is the father of the greater family of God - the parish community, comes to each

I write this as we approach the end of of the small home churches bringing the

Of course, these are not "normal" times.

the festal vigil and liturgy. Those who are not planning to attend either of those services, can contact make to arrangements receive some of the water. Elsewhere in this newsletter, I'm also including an abbreviated adapted version of the home blessing prayers for you to use at home. Please know

God, now joins Himself to that which He made that I will sorely miss the opportunity to meet so long ago. He becomes one with us by birth, and talk with you in your homes as I have in



When Thou, O Lord, was baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest! For the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee, and called Thee His beloved Son! And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of His word. O Christ our God who has revealed Thyself and has enlightend the world, glory to Thee! (Theophany troparion)

With love in Christ, Fr. Gregory

A MONK STORY

Submitted by Matuskha Alexandra Safchuk

During our years in Alaska, Fr. Joseph Kreta featured, as a regular part of his sermons, monk stories. I settled into these stories with eagerness, trying to follow the narrative, quiet the squirming toddler I held (I'm looking at you, Nathan), seeking out a place near enough to the heating system to feel the warmth, but far enough away that it wouldn't impede hearing the sermon. I benefited greatly from these stories, even though mine was not a monastic life.

A year or so ago (or as they say, pre-Covid19) my daughter-in-law's father told me a monk story. Recently I asked him for it and he sent it to me in Arabic (I have a three word Arabic vocabulary), but, thankfully, later also sent a translation. I include this story here, as the year crowns and we look to 2021.

One day, a hermit monk was in the mountains, looking for a place to live. He came upon a large treasure of gold and jewelry, shining in the darkness of a cave. He ran from the cave, shouting, "Death! Death! I saw death in this cave."

Three bandits happened to be passing by at that moment and they entered the cave with the monk and were dazzled by

the sight of the treasure and astonished at the monk who said

that the treasure is death.

The bandits dismissed the monk, "You go to your prayers and worship and we will take care of this death."

They sifted through the treasure, deliberating how they would take it from the cave and share it. Finally, they agreed that one of them would go to the nearest village to bring back food and a donkey to carry the treasure.

When the one bandit arrived in the village, he thought to himself, "Why should I not take the treasure alone?" And so he put poison in the food and returned to the cave on the donkey.



Meanwhile, the two bandits waiting in the cave agreed to kill the other bandit upon his return, so that the two of them could share the treasure. When the bandit returned with the food, they attacked him and hit him and killed him.

And they are the food that the now dead bandit had brought, happy that their plan had resulted in an increase in their

A MONK STORY

Continued from Previous

share of the treasure. Quickly though, they were poisoned by the food and died also.

The hermit monk was wise when he said that the treasure is death.

The year 2020 has been nothing if not chaotic, unsettling and anxiety producing. As I type this article emerging vaccines offer

us hope that life might once again include restaurant dining, visiting without masks, and a full, glorious choir. Life though, like the treasure that it is, is not always what it seems. The isolation and quarantining have given us all a chance to step back from the overwhelming pace and crushing fullness of our lives.

What lessons will we take into the future? I would guess that we might be using more hand sanitizer and allowing more distance, particularly in crowded venues. But in the shininess of our restored life, let us not forget the One who has gifted it to us. The still small voice of the Lord calls to us, beckoning us to understand that the restaurants, concerts and opportunities to gather indiscriminately are a fragile freedom at best. It is all a shiny treasure, gold and jewelry, and can be lost in a moment, when a primitive string of RNA brings us to our collective knees.



As my father lay dying I listened as the cares of the world left him one by one and he went on to a place of peace, a place without sickness or taxes or screen doors that didn't fit. Although he was dying, he left the world of death for a new life. Now as we prepare to enter back into our old lives, let us try to see with the clarity of the hermit monk and seek treasure that we store up in heaven, where moth and rust and virus cannot take it away. In the end, that will be all that matters.

In Christ's love, Mka. Alexandra Safchuk

OUTREACH UPDATE

I wanted to thank you all SO much for your generous contributions to our Thanksgiving and Christmas outreach collections for the Highland Elementary School families. As a result of your incredible support -- in a pandemic, no less -- we were able to donate 58 grocery gift cards (for both holidays), plus a car full of toys, clothes, and Target/Amazon gift cards. The community coordinator at Highland that we work with asked me to pass along her thanks -- it has been a very difficult year for the families she works with, and your donations are bringing such joy and relief this holiday season!

Wishing you all a safe, healthy, and blessed Nativity feast, Kyra Smerkanich

P.S. - Please keep an eye out in the new year for additional outreach initiatives!



THE DIVINE CHILD

Fr. Alexander Schmemann

The eternal God was born as a little child."...It is the words "child" and "God" which give us the most striking revelation about the Christmas mystery. Yes, Christmas is a feast for children, not just because of the tree that we decorate and light, but in the much deeper sense that children alone are unsurprised that when God comes to us on earth, he comes as a child. This image of God as child continues to shine on us through icons and through innumerable works of art, revealing that what is most essential and joyful in Christianity is found precisely here, in this eternal childhood of God.

Christ said "become like children" (Mt 18:3). What does this mean? What are adults missing, or better, what has been choked, drowned or deafened by a thick layer of adulthood? Above all, is it not that capacity, so characteristic of children, to wonder, to rejoice and, most importantly, to be



whole both in joy and sorrow? Adulthood chokes as well the ability to trust, to let go and give one's self completely to love and to believe with all one's being. And finally, children take seriously what adults are no longer capable of accepting: dreams, that which breaks through our everyday experience and our cynical mistrust, that deep mystery of the world and everything within it revealed to saints, children, and poets.

Thus, only when we break through to the child living hidden within us, can we inherit as our own the joyful mystery of God coming to us as a child. The child has neither authority nor power, yet the very absence of authority reveals him to be a king; his defenselessness and vulnerability are precisely the source of his profound power. The child in that distant Bethlehem cave has no desire that we fear him; He enters our hearts not by frightening us, by proving his power and authority, but by love alone. He is given to us as a child, and only as children can we in turn love him and give ourselves to him. The world is ruled by authority and power, by fear and domination. The child God liberates us from that. All He desires from us is our love, freely given and joyful; all He desires is that we give him our heart. And we give it to a defenseless, endlessly trusting child.

Through the feast of Christmas, the Church reveals to us a joyful mystery: the mystery of freely given love imposing itself on no one. A love capable of seeing, recognizing and loving God in the Divine Child, and becoming the gift of a new life.

Source: https://svotssynaxis.com/2011/12/13/the-divine-child/

PRAYERS FOR THE BLESSING OF HOME AND FAMILY.

* Before beginning, please have ready a bowl of blessed water, brush, a lit candle, icon, and lists of living and departed family and friends to pray for.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Amen!

(All sing) When Thou, O Lord, was baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest! For the voice of the Father bore witness to Thee, and called Thee His beloved Son! And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the truthfulness of His word. O Christ our God who has revealed Thyself and has enlightened the world, glory to Thee!

(As the Theophany troparion is sung, process throughout the home and sprinkle the rooms with the blessed water)

Have mercy on us, O God, according to Thy great goodness, we pray Thee, hearken and have mercy.



Lord have mercy (3X)

We pray for the repose of the souls of the servants of God	- 1
Lord have mercy (3X)	
Let us pray to the Lord.	
Lord have mercy.	
O Christ our God and Savior, who did deign to be baptized by John in the who did enter under the roof of Zacchaeus for his salvation and that of his now O Lord, bless this home, keep safe from all harm thy servants, and grant unto all of us salvation, good health, peacthings, and preserve and protect us O Lord always now and ever and unto	s whole household, do Thou the same who dwell here, and also e, prosperity, furtherance in all good

Amen!

THE GREAT CONJUNCTION

Submitted by Anelia Rotunda



Jupiter and Saturn are seen coming together in the night sky, over the sails of Brill windmill in Brill, England. Jim Dyson/Getty Images

Peace be with you, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, my beautiful Saint Mark spiritual family! I have truly missed seeing each and every one of you and our corporate worship of our very personal God... I pray you and your loved ones are in good health and the Lord Himself encamps around you. I wrote something in my journal this morning, closed the book and went about my day. Then I had this nudge in my heart to share it with my spiritual family. I have learned over the years to yield and submit to these nudges. To God be the Glory!

Anelia, a sinner		

December 21, 2020

In just a few short hours humanity will be given a chance to experience something for the first time in 800 years—Jupiter and Saturn will align in the nighttime sky tonight in what scientist call "the great conjunction," a truly rare astronomical event. Everyone is supposed to be able to see the planets, even without the aid of telescopes. The naked human eye, unaided by technology, should be able to see the biggest planets in our Solar System appearing very close together. Scientist say that to us they will look like they are a tenth of a degree apart (so that at arm's length, a pinky finger could cover both planets), even tough in reality they are millions of miles apart in space.

THE GREAT CONJUNCTION

Continued from Previous

"Once in a lifetime" is pretty good indication that something merits being labeled as rare. And if you have binoculars or a telescope, you may be able to see Jupiter's four large moons, they say... What a spectacle!!!

This morning, however, there was a thick fog on the ground, at least where I am. My mother (who is not a believer) called me from half way around the world with the exciting news about tonight's event and inquired about the visibility I would have to witness the rare historical event. After all, it's a "once in a lifetime" spectacle and people are calling it The Bethlehem Star.

At the time my mother called, I was curled up under a blanket reading my daily devotions and Scripture reading, which somehow took me to the Book of Leviticus in the Old Testament. There was a reference to salt in today's Scripture reading found in Mark 9:49-50

"For everyone will be salted with fire and every sacrifice will be salted with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltness, how will you season it? Have salt yourselves, and be at peace with one another." Mark 9:49-50

The notes in the Study Bible read:

"Jesus used salt to illustrate 3 qualities that should be found in his followers:

- 1. We should remember God's faithfulness, just as salt when used with a sacrifice recalled God's covenant with his people (Leviticus 2:13)
- 2. We should make a difference in the "flavor" of the world we live in, just as salt changes food's flavor (Matthew 5:13)
- 3. We should counteract the moral decay in society, just as salt preserves food from decay. When we lose this desire to "salt" the earth with the love and message of God, we become useless to God."



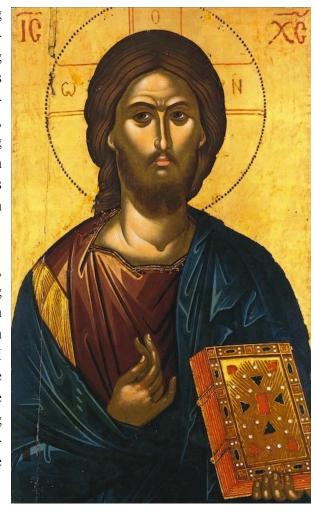
These footnotes led me to the Book of Leviticus, which is set at the foot of Mount Sinai. It was there the people of God spent a great deal of time (2 years) as God showed them a new way of life, giving them instructions on how sinful people can relate to a holy God. These instructions, dismissed by many of us (including myself) as a record of bizarre rituals of a long-lost time, offer important insight for all of us into God's nature and His very character. SIN NEEDS TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. We can not take our relationship with our holy God lightly. We are invited into a personal relationship with Him, but first we have to deal with our sin. And this is so counterintuitive in our modern world where we are told we have free reign to pursue our passions and do all things to make us happy and feel good, because we deserve it. We are bombarded with constant messages which have casual (or no)

THE GREAT CONJUNCTION

Continued from Previous

attitude towards sin and even make sin attractive and appealing to us. No wonder we are in a spiritual desert as a society, a nation, and as humanity in general. The cost of sin is the last thing on people's mind, or so it appears. Only God knows the hearts of each of us so it is no place for me to cast judgment on others. I can, and I SHOULD look inside my own heart, however, and invite God to search it while coming to my knees having realized my own need for repentance and restoration. "Search me, oh God, and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139: 23-24

Just like the Israelites, newly delivered from slavery in Egypt, camped at the foot of Mount Sinai for two whole years listening to God and learning new ways of being in communion with Him (especially after having spent 400 years as slaves in a foreign land and adopted some of the pagan ways of life and worship), I too need to encamp around the Living God and have some time of retrospect, rest, learning, repenting, building and meeting the Lord face to face. Repentance and obedience is all I need to bring along with me... well, that and the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart, which I know God will not despise. "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy." Leviticus 19:2



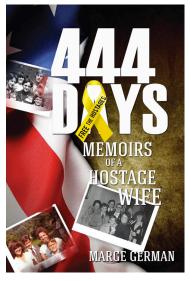
At the end, it is not so much the fog outside (which is lifting as I write this and the sunlight is bathing the day for a glorious new beginning) which will prevent me from observing "the great conjunction" tonight, but rather the fog of sin, unconfessed and undealt with, which is in my own heart. My ability (or lack of) to retain the salt and flavor of God is the thing that prevents me from being used by the One who created the stars and the whole universe for His divine plan. Ultimately, what my heart desires the most is seeing the light of Christ, much brighter than any light observed in the night sky tonight or any other night, a light more brilliant than the naked human eye can handle to look at, a light which no darkness can extinguish. I thirst for and desire more than observing a rare "once in a lifetime" spectacle. I long for the Light of the World Himself. And like Moses, I can only hope that my face is radiant because I have been in His presence... not because of anything I have done, but because of Him and what He has done. Tonight a "great conjunction" can brighten the night sky for a moment, but only the light of God can extinguish the darkness in the night sky of my soul and by His grace, I don't have to wait 800 years to experience the most marvelous of all things—God's love!!!

Glory to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit!

Amen

444 DAYS: MEMOIRS OF A HOSTAGE WIFE

Long-time St. Mark Parishioner Marge German wrote a book titled "444 Days: Memoirs of a Hostage Wife" on her experience during the Iranian Hostage Crisis. Her husband was taken hostage by the militants who stormed the U.S. Embassy. The St. Mark Book Club recently invited Marge to spoke to us after Coffee Hour via Zoom on Sunday, December 13th. The recorded talk is available on our YouTube Channel here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AxMqGmK6vwE for anyone who missed it. Marge's book is available to purchase on Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/444-Days-Memoirs-Hostage-Wife-ebook/dp/B08HRFLR6X





Marge German

444 Days: Memoirs of a Hostage Wife

Presented by the St. Mark Book Club

First Snow Fall of the Season! December 16th, 2020



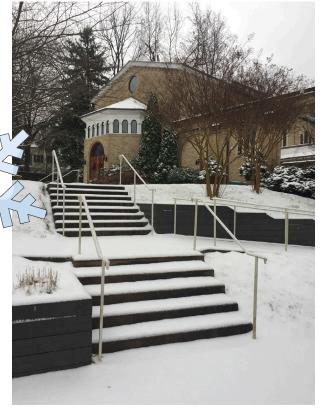


Photo by Fr. Gregory Safchuk

GINGER TUMERIC HERBAL TEA

Submitted by Sharon Carter

This tea is a recent discovery of mine and I can't rave enough about it! It has many benefits and tastes really great! A lot of times these herbal-type teas can be very bitter or taste kind of dirty. But not this recipe, it's delicious! Enjoy!

Ginger Tumeric Herbal Tea

Ingredients

2 cups water
½ teaspoon chopped fresh turmeric
½ teaspoon chopped fresh ginger
1 cinnamon stick
1 tablespoon honey
1 lemon wedge



Directions

Peel and chop about 1 inch of fresh ginger and tumeric. Be careful, tumeric can stain. Wear gloves to work with fresh tumeric! Most grocery stores carry fresh tumeric, but if you can't find it, ground tumeric from the spice aisle is perfectly fine!

Bring water to a boil in a small saucepan; add chopped turmeric, ginger, and cinnamon. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain tea into a large glass; add honey and lemon wedge.

I like to squeeze the lemon wedge a little before adding into the tea.

Enjoy!

HOW TO MAKE A SNOWFLAKE

SUPPLIES NEEDED

Paper (preferably thin or lightweight paper)
 Scissors
 Protractor (optional)

Step 1: Make a paper square.

Start out with a square piece of paper, preferably thin or lightweight paper. You can use square origami paper or follow these easy steps for making a square from any rectangular piece of paper.

Step 2: Fold diagonally in half.

Fold the square diagonally in half to come up with a triangle.

Step 3: Fold in half.

Fold the resulting triangle in half to make a smaller triangle.

Step 4: Divide the triangle into 3 sections.

The most crucial and perhaps the trickiest step in making a paper snowflake is dividing the triangle into three equal sections. The most accurate way to do this is to use a protractor to divide the angle at the triangle's apex (the corner opposite the longest side) into three sections, each with a 30-degree angle. If you don't have a protractor, you can estimate the size of the sections as you do Steps 5 and 6.

Step 5: Fold the left section.

Once you've marked out the three equal sections, fold the left section towards the front.

Step 6: Fold the right section.

Similarly fold the right section towards the front.

Step 7: Flip the shape.

Flip the shape over so that the side with the horizontal edge is facing front.

Step 8: Cut along the horizontal edge.

Cut along the horizontal edge so that you end up with a wedge.

Step 9: Cut random shapes.

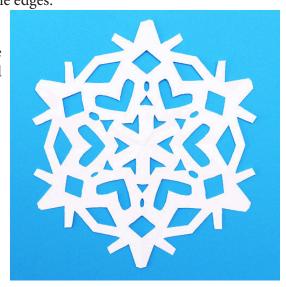
While keeping the wedge folded, cut out random shapes out of the edges.

Step 10: Unfold the paper.

Carefully unfold the paper to reveal your paper snowflake. Like real snowflakes, your paper snowflake has a 6-point or six-sided symmetry.

Step 11: Make more snowflakes.

In nature, no two snowflakes are exactly the same. Try making different shape cut-outs in Step 9 to come up with your own unique snowflakes.





GROCERY CARDS

Please consider donating grocery cards for the needy all, and especially, through-out Lent! Please see Father Gregory or John Bilyeu for questions or donations. Thank you!!

STEPPING STONES MEAL DELIVERY

Please sign up for monthly food preparation and delivery to Stepping Stones shelter in Rockville, MD. The sign-up sheets are on the Outreach bulletin board outside the fellowship hall.

UPCOMING FEASTS: Services will also be live streamed on our YouTube Channel

Friday, January 1 at 9:30 am - Circumcision of Our Lord

Tuesday, January 5 at 7:00 pm - Eve of Theophany Compline

Wednesday, January 6 at 9:30 am - Divine Liturgy for Theophany

Tuesday, February 2 at 9:30 am - Divine Liturgy for Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple

Monday, March 15th - Great Lent begins

Thursday, March 25 at 9:30 am - Divine Liturgy for Annunciation

ST. MARK YOUTUBE CHANNEL: https://www.youtube.com/saintmarkorthodoxchurch



BLESSED MAT. OLGA OF ALASKA WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP

The Blessed Matushka Olga Prayer Group has been meeting every Tuesday at 10:30 am via Zoom: https://us04web.zoom.us/j/152870659. All are welcome to join and pray. We are able to continue with intercessory prayers, Akathists, and fellowship. May God continue to show us his great Mercy and keep us safe until we can pray and worship together in church



Please join us as you can and please remember us in your prayers. All prayer requests may be given to Debbi Dillon, Mat. Alexandra or Marcella Hydock. Also, there is a prayer request email address on the St. Mark website.

We hope you can join us on:

Intercessory Prayer Dates & Times:

- TUESDAY, JAN 5th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, FEB 2nd, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, MAR 2nd, 10:30 AM

Akathist Dates & Times:

- TUESDAY, JAN 19th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, FEB 16th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, MAR 16th, 10:30 AM



Weddings

10/10/20 - Michael Beddow and Jessica Fitzgerald 12/27/20 - Larisa Looby and Richard Johnson



May God Grant Them Many Years!

Baptisms

10/17/20 - Luke James Miller 11/14/20 - Jacob Prose

Chrismations

10/04/20 - Maggie Arvizu 11/22/20 - Brett Killian

May God Grant Them Many Years!

Memory Eternal! Deaths

10/04/20 - Marie Lungociu, sister-in-law of Michael & Kimberly Lungociu

10/09/20 - Stevens Heckscher, Father of Jurretta Heckscher

10/11/20 - Helen Pastuch, Aunt of Helen Kerch

11/19/20 - Vincent Dumm, brother of Rose Zabela

12/01/20 - Catherine Mikuluk

12/22/20 - Margaret Hutchko, Mother of Tina Burpee



Happy Birthday!

	January		February		March
1	Jim Orban	1	William Koopersmith	3	Mat. Tamara Cowan
2	Stacy Pedersen	2	Olga Skenderska	4	Gwyneth Berry
4	Samuel Kumar		Andrew Wickard		Samantha Sokich
5	Michael Albert	5	Gabriel Baleanu	6	Doug Dillon
	Anna Meyendorff		Victoria Olynik		Ryan Jefferson
7	John Bainbridge		Fr. Gregory Safchuk	7	Eileen Holovac
	Lisa Cannon	6	Anna Catherine Mersereau	10	Debra Yakubik
	Ted Koopersmith	7	Abigail Datch	11	Cormac Allen
	Pamela McHugh	8	Juliana Moser		Jerry Lutes
8	Alexander Masick	11	Marge German		Kyra Smerkanich
9	Susan Petro		Stefan Gleason	12	Árianna Cacic
	Debbie Sieff		Tom Jenkins		Aaron Prose
11	Debbi Dillon		Tamara Karas	13	Nadia Burns
	Anelia Rotunda		Anna Kronick		Catherine Mikuluk
12	Regina Kundell	14	Luke Matthew Tatusko	14	Beth Tucker
13	Elspeth Berry	17	Nicholas Lapato	15	David Hardy
	Susan Orban		Clark Little		Sean McHugh
14	Joan Mitchum		Chloe Nimmer	16	Patricia Ihnat
15	Nicholas Bilyeu	18	Peter McHugh	17	Matthew Looby
	Michael Bezuneh	19	Nina Borissow	19	Catherine Corbin
16	Justin Ciubotaru		Mary Ann Fitzgerald	20	Vera Bumbak
17	Hannah Perry		Donna Glenn		Kieran Perdue
	Janice Victorov	21	Roberta (Mitchum) McCunney	25	Michael Mihailov
18	Katheryn Cannon	22	Nancy Stanton	26	Kellie Holovac
	John C. Petro	24	Caleb German	27	Alice Krenitsky
19	Tom Cipu		Michael McCunney	28	Theo Sheppard
	Leroy Gumpert	25	John Bilyeu	29	Susan Sielinski
22	Slavina Skenderska		Stacy Nimmer	30	Michael Ahmadi
23	Eugenia Jankovic		Tabitha Voth	31	David Rodak
24	Peter Dillon	27	Isaiah Rodak		Rachel Sieff
	Anthony Sekellick	28	Marjorie Sielinski		Zachary Sieff
25	Rose Zabela				
26	Matthew Nimmer		1		

Ivana Rotunda Michael Berencz

James Lacko Kaitlin Barber

Tyler Church Jurretta Heckscher Marilyn Macht Michelle Corbin

Rodica Cipu Mark Pierce

Nicholas Herrara

27

28

29

30 31

