

St. Mark Evangelizer

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

Volume 22 - Number 1

January - March 2022 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

Joy and Suffering

Spiritual joy goes together with spiritual suffering. It is wrong to think that joy comes only at the end when the suffering is over. Joy in Christ goes together with suffering in Christ. They co-exist and are dependent on each other for their power and strength. As blessed mourning over sin is the mourning that comes with the joy of salvation, so suffering in the flesh, in this world, is consonant with—and in a real sense is even caused by—the unspeakable joy of salvation. Thus Saint James can say that Christians should “count it all joy” when they “meet various trials,” knowing that the “full effect” of their steadfast faith is that they may be “perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (Jas 1.2–3). (Father Thomas Hopko)

Pondering Science and Faith

I have always been fascinated by science; not as a substitute for faith, but as a random action or spontaneity and companion. In my journey through life, I’ve noticed how the questions of “how” and “why” have sparked some of the most rewarding and creative achievements in human history. Just as science and faith compliment one another, so too are these questions of “how” and “why” interrelated. They drive the disciplines of science and faith to both inform us and inspire us. In regard to Covid 19 and its plethora of variants, I put them forth to science and faith for answers.

The virus continues to be studied intensely by researchers the world over to further understand the mechanics of how it functions in order (rightly so) to mitigate its harmful/deadly effects and produce a defense or cure. In the arena of faith, it’s often discussed as a plague which reminds us that we’re in the fallen world and challenges us to deeper faith and trust in God. Both are important. The world, separated from God, will always confound us.

The thing is so tiny as to be invisible to our eyes and is only observable and photographed with an electron microscope. In its primitive simplicity of composition and function, many deny that it is even “alive” by normative criteria. It cannot move and it cannot think, yet by its ever more transmissible mutations, it seems to fight for its very existence and dominance in the living order as fiercely as any human or sentient animal predator.

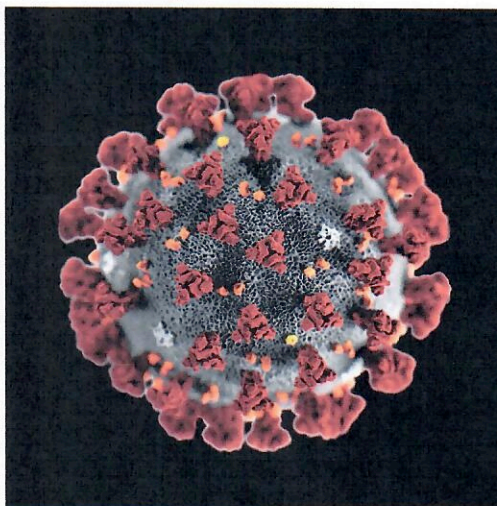
Some may be content to ascribe it all to a random action or spontaneity and coincidence. But for those of us who hold faith that is rooted in scripture, we have the same uneasiness with this as we do with the notion of a big bang without a Creator. We see evidence of intelligent design throughout the created universe.

God is good, and everything He created in the beginning is also good. But we live now in the fallen world - whose processes are often violently at odds with what we might call good. If we read the last half of Genesis, chapter 3, we are told that this is so.

The virus and all of the transient realities in our world make us anxious, realizing how out of control things seem. And the truth is that it is ultimately out of our control. It is, however, not out of the control of the One to Whom we can turn in faith for the answers we desire from science. This is how we live by faith in a fallen world, knowing that the lifelines we grasp in science are held by a Force stronger than science itself - God. “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.” (I Cor. 13:12)

The Corona virus along with other things that adversely affect life and health on earth, serve to remind us that we are “alive” in a world that is passing away, and immersed in the midst of a cosmic battle between good and evil. Let us live wisely therefore in hope of God’s joyful promise of life redeemed and creation restored.

- Fr. Gregory



A NEW COMMANDMENT DURING A PANDEMIC – AM I WILLING?

Submitted by Matuskha Alexandra Safchuk


I often pray Psalm 141:3, “Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips.” At times this might require packing tape, since I sometimes just open my mouth to, as it were, exchange feet. For me, as for others, regrets and disappointments in wounded relationships are well nuanced. Each has its own painful face, fueled by circumstances both in and outside our control.

At one point I wrote myself a note, quoting Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self control: against such there is no law.” This rubric presents a stark contrast to the constant disharmony that so often defines life in the fallen world. The opportunities to disagree, to damage, to destroy, are endless. I cannot eradicate that disharmony. It exists. I can only control how I impact it, begging the question, “Am I part of the problem or part of the solution?”

Many of us love the Akathist, “Glory to God for All Things” and our awareness that this Akathist was prayed in the concentration and work camps, against a background of sickness, starvation, darkness and death, adds a certain sweetness to the text. The ability to see beyond the fences and filth, to the beauty of God’s goodness in both His creation and His creatures, is an amazing achievement. In camps and on bunks, those praying that Akathist were called to respond as Christians in the circumstances in which they found themselves.

Today, discussion of the application of public health measures has become de rigueur. And I hang on every word. These are the circumstances in which we, the Christians in the community of St. Mark Orthodox Church in Bethesda, Maryland find ourselves. As stewards of one another we must pray for the courage to look at each situation, each interaction, each relationship with the eyes of the heart, knowing that we all bring our brokenness, our expectations and our limitations as well as our strengths and our gifts to the table.

The answers to the concerns of our present day are not clear, but the eyes of the heart should seek love, the first fruit of the Spirit, as a leveling force in a polarizing culture. The plumb line of the Christian life is never about how we apply public health measures, but about how we apply love and how love informs our actions. Love must be the lens through which we see our family, our parish, the person in front of us in the grocery store and an impatient driver on the beltway. How does love direct our steps? Do others recognize our actions as loving ones?



*But the fruit of the Spirit is love,
joy, peace, forbearance, kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness
and self-control.*

Galatians 5:22-23

(Continued on next page.)

A NEW COMMANDMENT DURING A PANDEMIC – AM I WILLING?

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To let love direct our steps requires a radical departure from rugged individualism and self-sufficiency. It requires us to die to ourselves every day, every hour, every moment. It requires that we constantly refocus on God, who is Love, to find our way. We can make decisions using other criteria, but are those the decisions of a Christian?

In our parish we beautifully sing John 12:34, “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also must love one another.” But it is the next verse, John 12:35, “By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another” that teaches us how we can be recognized as Christians. As we continue to navigate the murky waters of a world pandemic, I beg God’s and your forgiveness for times that I have failed to apply the fruits of the Spirit to my interactions, times when I am not known first and foremost by my love for others. Lord, have mercy!



**LOVE FIRST.
EVEN WHEN IT IS HARD.**
MALACHI 4:6

Asking God to work among us and through us,
Mka. Alexandra Safchuk

OUTREACH UPDATE

Thanks to your tremendous generosity we were able to deliver a car full of gifts to the coordinator for Highland Elementary school, as well as \$500 worth of Giant grocery gift cards to help offset the cost of Christmas dinners for some of their families in need. Thanks to you, this Christmas season is all the more bright for a deserving group of children and their families!

Wishing everyone a blessed Nativity!

In Christ, Kyra Smerkanich

p.s. be on the lookout for more outreach initiatives in the new year!



THANK YOU...

Submitted by Tina Burpee

to everyone who helped with this year's bazaar. It is so encouraging to see everyone pitch-in and help with the workshops and all two days of the bazaar. Thank you to those who came to the food workshops; to those who made food at home, to the bread bakers; to everyone who prepared borscht and baked from scratch; to the chicken pounders, rollers & dippers; to the filling and dough makers, pinchers and cookers; to those who helped with workshop cleanup; to those who braved the cold by working outdoors; to those who procured gifts; to those who acted as chairpeople and those who acted as helpers; for those who explained our faith to visitors; for those who prayed for the strength to keep going; to those who stood on their feet for two days of fellowship and fun and gave unselfishly of their time and money to make our bazaar, once again, a wonderful success. Our bazaar has become a beautiful way to give of ourselves for the Love of our Church; but ultimately it is for the Love of God. May God grant you many years!

The Bazaar Committee

THANK YOU!

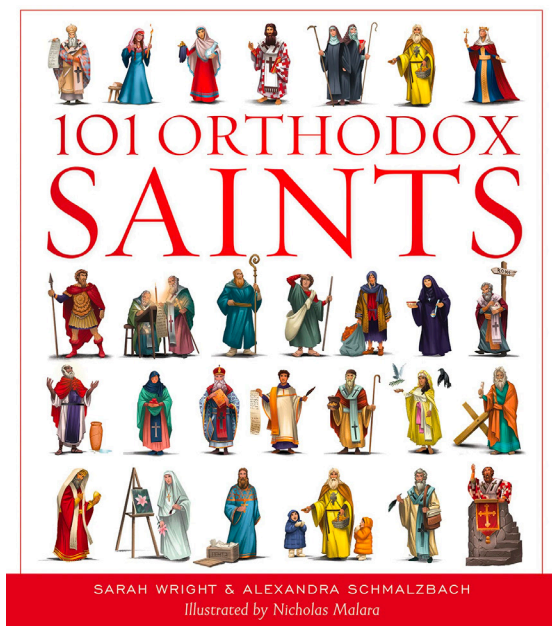
ADDING TO OUR ORTHODOX LIBRARY

Submitted by Kelly Meyers

Orthodoxy is full of aspects that engage our senses: the beautiful a cappella choir, the flickering candles, the fragrant incense and rhythmic clinking of the censor, and of course the visual feast of brilliant icons everywhere. Yet, all that vibrancy and color rarely translates to our Orthodox books for kids. Like many Orthodox parents searching for books I've often relied on general Christian literature. For that reason, some of the latest offerings caught my eye.

I would also argue that some of these are perfect for adults as well. I learn and retain a lot from reading with my kids, and part of that is how they present the material and distill key and interesting facts. The best book to learn from is one you will actually pick up and have the time for, so consider these for the grandkids and read them first!

This book, styled like the popular DK books, is an absolute treasure to explore. The authors selected saints from different time periods, different vocations, and different places to convey that "God can use people from all walks of life!" The introduction discusses how someone becomes a saint, has an index for feast days, and a colorful timeline of when the saints lived. The majority of the book dedicates a page to each saint, with the context of where they lived and extra fun facts. While many of us may have looked up the history of Saint Nicholas, this book also has a page for Wenceslas of Prague, who inspired the Christmas carol Good King Wenceslas. The Orthodox Illustrator is also the illustrator of the kids' books "Goodnight Jesus" and "Sasha and the Dragon".



101 Orthodox Saints, By Sarah Wright & Alexandra Schmalzbach, Illustrated by Nicholas Malara
ISBN: 978-1-944967-88-8

NATIVITY PLAY 2021

Submitted by Anelia Rotunda



O come all ye faithful
Joyful and triumphant
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem
Come and behold Him
Born the King of Angels
O come let us adore Him
O come let us adore Him
O come let us adore Him
Christ the Lord



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 _____, departed this life; and that our good God who loves mankind will show mercy upon them and forgive them all their sins both voluntary and involuntary.

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 river Jordan for our salvation and who did enter under the roof of Zacchaeus for his salvation and that of his whole household, do Thou the same now O Lord, bless this home, keep safe from all harm thy servants _____ who dwell here, and also to _____, and grant unto all of us salvation, good health, peace, prosperity, furtherance in all good things, and preserve and protect us O Lord always now and ever and unto ages of ages.

Amen!



Shady Grove PREGNANCY CENTER



December 15, 2021

Ms. Christina Kalavritinos
7801 Cayuga Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20817

Dear Christina,

This Christmas season may look different for many of us. For one couple, Rachel and Anthony, this Christmas will look **entirely different** for them. Because of God's faithfulness, through the resources at Shady Grove Pregnancy Center, and your generous support, it will be their first Christmas as a family—with their newborn baby, Sage. (Pictured here)



Originally introduced at our annual banquet in October, proud new parents Rachel and Anthony welcomed Sage, on Nov 9th weighing 7lbs, 7oz. During this time of celebration of the birth of Christ, we join Rachel and Anthony in welcoming this new little life into the world, and by God's grace, we celebrate a precious life saved.

We want you to know the impact of the gift. You have blessed others by coordinating this donation by **The Daughters of Penelope and The Maids of Athena, of precious hand knit baby hats (made by Helen Koustenis) and the beautiful baby clothes, diapers and wipes. The knit hats were appreciated by mothers last year. (onesie compliments of SGPC)**

For us parents, or grandparents who have witnessed the magic and miracles of the Christmas season through the eyes of a child, we know how truly priceless these memories are. Because of your support, new families like Rachel, Anthony, and Sage will know these times as well. Our passion and our mission is that no family misses out on these memories. And with support from our community, we continue to pursue that to the extent of our capacity.

With **92% of women who leave our center choosing LIFE** for their baby, it has never been more imperative for us to not only get them in the door, but to also have the immediate resources on hand that they need to support a decision for life.

After all, it was the birth of a new family and the spreading of that news that created the first Christmas morning. **Would you help us spread the hope of Christ among our community once more this Christmas?** Share Rachel and Anthony's story at shorturl.at/uBHNZ

We have seen the difference one voice can make. As such, we also know the difference one donation can make. Thank you for being a part of that lifesaving difference!

Celebrating Life,


Maggie Downing
Executive Director

cc: V. Rev. Gregory Safchuk

16220 Frederick Road, Suite 118 • Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877
Office: 301-963-6223 • Web Site: www.pregnancy-options.org

DID YOU KNOW?

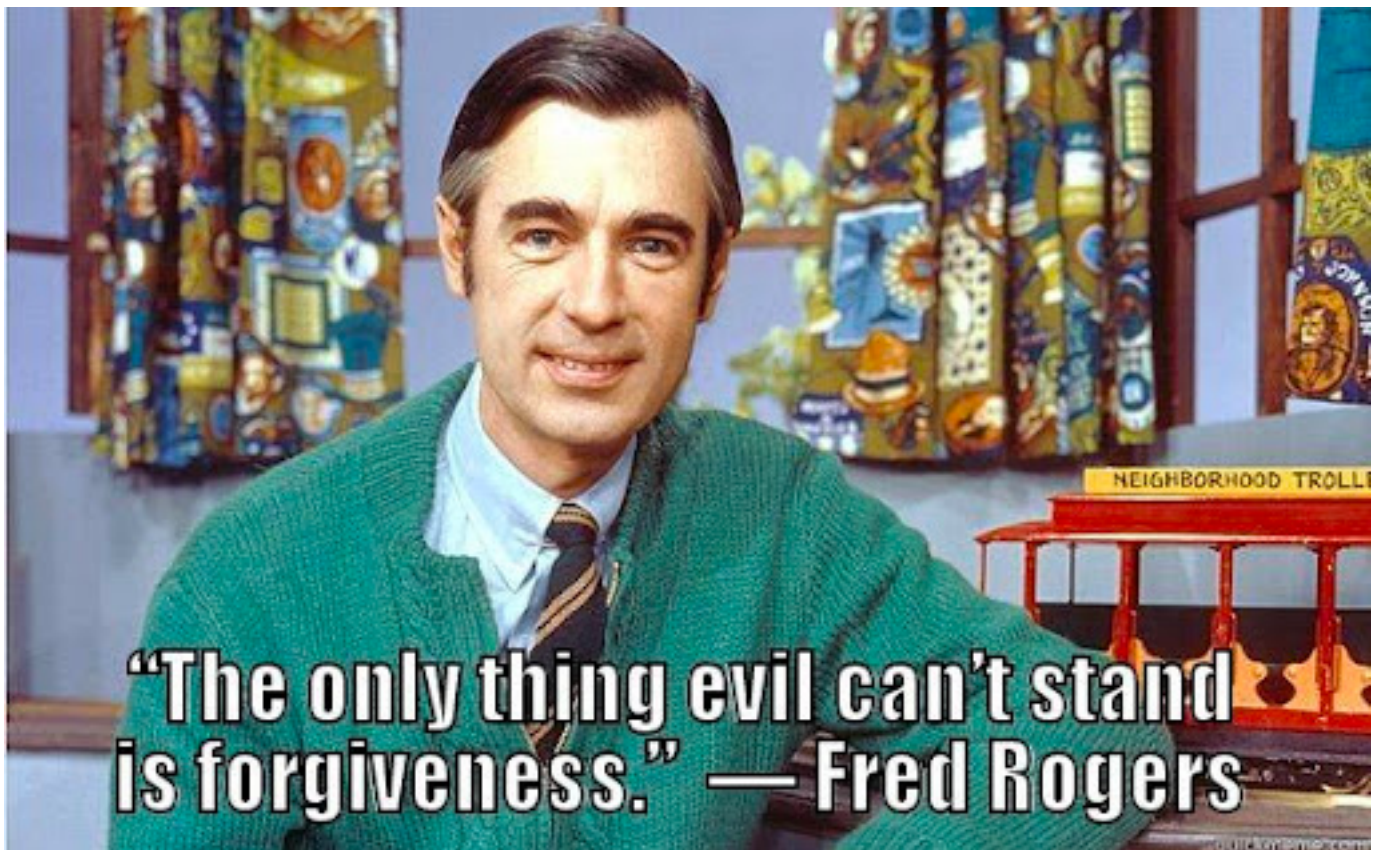
Yes! We DO recycle!

We recently switched from Waste Management to Potomac Disposal for our trash disposal service. Many of you have wondered if we still recycle since the recycle container in the back of the parking lot says "Cardboard Only."

The answer is YES! We do technically still recycle. Except now, Potomac Disposal does the recyclable sorting for us! They ask us to only sort the cardboard and put it in the appropriately marked container.



Please know it is ok to put plastic and glass directly in the regular trash. Potomac Disposal has assured us they sort for us. It is also posted on their website that that they provide this service. If you have any questions, please see Sharon Carter!





UPCOMING EVENTS

GROCERY CARDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Monday, March 14th - Great Lent begins

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

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

WOMEN' BOOK DISCUSSION: The next meeting of the group is on Thursday, January 20th, 2022 via Zoom beginning at 7:00 pm. We will discuss Rachel and Leah: Sisters and Rivals from our current book Women of the Bible Speak by Shannon Bream. If you'd like to join the discussion please contact either Matushka Alexandra (asafchuk@hotmail.com) or Marcella Hydock (vze5847i@verizon.net).

Matushka Alexandra will send the Zoom link few days ahead of January 20th.



UPDATED BLESSED MAT. OLGA OF ALASKA WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP

° We have resumed meeting in person for intercessory prayer. We meet on the 1st Tuesday of the month @ 10:30 a.m. in the church nave. We no longer do a hybrid version for intercessory prayer.

° We continue to do a hybrid version on the 3rd Tuesday of the month @10:30 a.m. to pray an Akathist. A link for the Akathist is usually sent the day before.



Please join us if you can. To update the intercessory prayer list please contact Debbi Dillon at debbi.dillon@gmail.com We thank you for prayers on our behalf. Holy Mother Olga, Pray to God for us!

Intercessory Prayer Dates & Times:

- TUESDAY, JAN 4th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, FEB 1st, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, MAR 1st, 10:30 AM

Akathist Dates & Times:

- TUESDAY, JAN 18th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, FEB 15th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, MAR 15th, 10:30 AM



Weddings

10/09/21 - Nicholas Fitzgerald and Meghan O'Brian

May God Grant Them Many Years!



Baptisms

10/23/21 - Caleb Bryan

11/20/21 - Liam Snitchler

12/11/21 - Ryan Oliver Kissell

Chrismations

11/20/21 - Christopher Snitchler

May God Grant Them Many Years!



Memory Eternal!

Deaths

08/23/21 - Linda Elizabeth Weir

11/3/21 - Donald Truitt, father of Don Truitt

11/09/21 - Milcho, father-in-law of Karina Fortuny

11/29/21 - Fr. Joseph Giordano, friend of Mary Mytryshyn

11/29/21 - Jean Berger, mother of Cindy Jefferson

12/17/21 - John Sedor, father of Joe Sedor



May Their Memory Be Eternal!

Happy Birthday!

January

4 Samuel Kumar
5 Michael Albert
Anna Meyendorff
7 John Bainbridge
Lisa Cannon
Ted Koopersmith
Pamela McHugh
8 Alexander Masick
9 Susan Petro
Debbie Sieff
11 Debbi Dillon
Anelia Rotunda
12 Regina Kundell
14 Joan Mitchum
15 Michael Beddow
Michael Bezuneh
Nicholas Bilyeu
16 Justin Ciubotaru
17 Hannah Perry
Janice Victorov
18 Katheryn Cannon
John C. Petro
19 Tom Cipu
Roy Gumpert
22 Slavina Skenderska
23 Eugenia Jankovic
24 Peter Dillon
Anthony Sekellick
25 Rose Zabela
26 Matthew Nimmer
Ivana Rotunda
27 Michael Berencz
James Lacko
28 Kaitlin Barber
Nicholas Herrera
29 Tyler Church
Jurretta Heckscher
Marilyn Macht
30 Michelle Corbin
31 Rodica Cipu

February

1 William Koopersmith
2 Olga Skenderska
Tammy Tsuchida
Andrew Wickard
5 Gabriel Baleanu
Victoria Olynik
Fr. Gregory Safchuk
6 Anna Catherine Mersereau
7 Abigail Datch
8 Juliana Moser
11 Marge German
Stefan Gleason
Tom Jenkins
Tamara Karas
Anna Kronick
Jacob Prose
14 Luke Matthew Tatusko
17 Nicholas Lapato
Clark Little
Chloe Nimmer
18 Peter McHugh
19 Nina Borissow
Mary Ann Fitzgerald
Donna Glenn
21 Roberta (Mitchum) McCunney
22 Nancy Stanton
24 Caleb German
Michael McCunney
25 John Bilyeu
Stacy Nimmer
Tabitha Voth
27 Isaiah Rodak
28 Marjorie Sielinski

March

3 Mat. Tamara Cowan
4 Samantha Sokich
6 Doug Dillon
Ryan Jefferson
7 Eileen Holovac
10 Debra Yakubik
11 Cormac Allen
Jerry Lutes
Kyra Smerkanich
12 Arianna Cacic
Aaron Prose
13 Nadia Burns
14 Beth Tucker
15 David Hardy
Sean McHugh
16 Patricia Ihnat
17 Matthew Looby
19 Catherine Corbin
20 Vera Bumbak
21 Kieran Perdue
23 Adam Needham
25 Michael Mihailov
26 Kellie Holovac
28 Theo Sheppard
29 Susan Sielinski
30 Michael Ahmadi
Meghan Fitzgerald
31 David Rodak
Rachel Sieff
Zachary Sieff

Happy
Birthday

