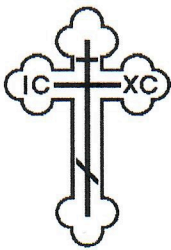


St. Mark Evangelizer

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

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October - December 2024 Issue



Saint Mark Church is a parish of the Orthodox Church in America, Archdiocese of Washington DC, under the omophor 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

Our Life Story

“Within the limits of this world, it is death which seals the life-story of each person... Each person who turns to Christ is stamped or sealed by their baptism, in imitation of Christ’s own death, dying to sin and this world. Yet for now their life and true identity “lies hidden with Christ in God” (Col 3.3), awaiting the decisive moment of their actual death, which will reveal whether their heart is still attached to this world, so making the transition of death painful, or whether it lies with God, so that they will be able to say, with Christ and the martyrs, “into thy hands I commend my spirit,” a self-offering which makes their whole life and being, even in death, eucharistic. Until that moment, and in preparation for it, Christian life in this world is a continual practice of death, or rather, of life in death, taking up the Cross daily and laying down their life for others, considering themselves dead to this world but alive in Christ Jesus.” (Fr. John Behr)

In God We Trust

The phrase above is famously on our American currency. More importantly though, it’s a bedrock statement of our Christian faith and is often expressed in our worship. It comes to us not only in the New Testament scriptures, but it is found boldly stated in the Old as well. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.” (Prov. 3:5) Another admonition in the same vein is: “Put not your trust in princes, in sons of men, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs he returns to his earth; on that very day his plans perish.” (Ps. 146: 3-4). In the New Testament, the concept is picked up in the use of the word “faith”. Our Lord says to Thomas, “Be not faithless, but believing”(Jn. 20:27). To His disciples he says: “If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ... nothing will be impossible to you” (Matt. 17:20) - faith of course, in God.

Generally, we who are “believers” would say that we do trust in God and have faith. But until that faith is tested, we don’t really know its depth or quality. One of the most severe tests of faith in scripture occurs when God commands Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. Abraham is obedient and his son is spared at the last moment. When we read of it in Genesis 22, we can only imagine how difficult that test must have been. In our own lives, the test of faith often coincides with us facing desperate or difficult circumstances when we may find faith lacking. The man who

comes to our Lord with a son who has epilepsy says it well: “I believe, help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24). It could be said that the entire message of the Bible can be summed up as God saying, “Trust Me”.

So why do we often find it so difficult to simply trust in God? I would say this is because in order to do this, we must abandon our sense of control and be ready to accept any result God may provide. Again an illustration of this comes from scripture. In describing his affliction in Asia, St. Paul says “...we were so utterly,



unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Why, we felt that we had received the sentence of death; but that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God...” (2 Cor. 1:8-9). In the same epistle, St. Paul writes that God spoke in answer to his prayer saying: “My

grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

Our first instinct when facing adversity is often to try and summon strength to face the challenge. But where we look for that is critical. Ultimately, we must remember that God is our source of strength. Certainly, we must prepare and act, but also remember to ask God’s guidance and blessings upon our efforts, recalling the Psalm: “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.” (Psalm 127:1).

- Fr. Gregory

CYBER SNARES – A WARNING AND A PRAYER

Submitted by Matuskha Alexandra Safchuk

In our material world our cyber world collides in a million different ways. It is all around us, invisible and yet intrusive – constantly. Although I have no idea how the cyber world works, I feel its tentacles when it shows me an ad for a store I have never visited but discussed with a friend near my computer. It is a mystery to me, even covert in its activities, and yet useful for communicating with my grandchildren and looking up recipes for pumpkin brownies.

In Alaska native fisherman wonder at those boat captains, unfamiliar with the power of the water, who venture fearlessly into the ocean ahead of a storm. The native people have a healthy respect for nature, carefully assessing the wind, the temperature, the color of the sky. Reading the signs of nature is a skill of those who spend their life by the sea.

But we, 21st Century Americans, we must learn to read the signs of this very unnatural inhabitant of our world – the internet. We must develop both a healthy regard for its power and a healthy fear of its scope. There it is at the breakfast table, organizing our schedule. A hundred times a day, to check the time, to see if it is snowing in Volokolamsk, to report our bloodwork, to find specific prayers, to check on friends, to share photos of our grandchildren.



But it is also wanting to take us in. To command more and more of our time and energy. To put before us dancing cats and poignant stories and health information and places that can bring us both connection and disconnection.

It was so helpful for me, during times of isolation, to watch our services on livestream. But I also see families eating in restaurants, each on their own phone, in a different kind of isolation, the kind that robs us of our empathy and replaces it with coldness. The kind that is very distracting and yet when we are distracted from it, we can become irritated and angry. The cyber world is always there for us, available, even-tempered, bright and shiny but also dark and replete with harm.

The internet can easily become a monster. I was amazed, and dismayed, to learn that the same action we

(Continued on next page.)

CYBER SNARES – A WARNING AND A PRAYER

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use to pull down and refresh our screen on our smartphone mimics the pull down of the lever at gambling slot machines. Apparently, this is not an accident, and the brain chemicals released during these actions can be addicting.

As our children (and grandchildren) begin this new school year I offer the prayer below, that came to me – on the internet – and that I now have taped to my computer. Handle with care, friends.

Prayer – Before Using the Internet

Be the helper of my soul, O God, for I walk in the midst of many snares. Deliver me from them and save me, for You are good and You love mankind.

With love in Christ,
Mka. Alexandra Safchuk

WELCOME FR. NICHOLAS & FAMILY!

Fr. Nicholas Roth was born in San Diego, CA, but has lived most of his life up and down the East Coast, from New York to Florida and everywhere in between. He and his wife, Matushka Mary, met in 1997 while studying at the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma. They began dating in 1999 and were married in 2002. Fr. Nicholas served in the United States Army for ten years, first enlisting as an Infantryman, and then being commissioned as an Ordnance officer. He deployed to Iraq twice (January 2005 to January 2006 and June 2007 to July 2008) and Afghanistan once (October 2009 to November 2010). Fr. Nicholas separated from the military in order to attend St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, where he was ordained to the holy priesthood in 2014.

Since graduating from St. Vladimir's, Fr. Nicholas has served at various churches in Arkansas, Florida, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina, and Texas, and now is attached to St Mark in Bethesda, MD. He previously served as Recording Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America's Standing Committee for Canonical Procedure, as well as serving as a member of the Secretariat for various All-American Councils. For his service to faithful of the OCA, Fr. Nicholas has been awarded the nabadrennik, skufiya, kamilavka, and gold cross.



Fr. Nicholas has spent time off and on in arts and cultural institutions since 1995 and currently works for the federal government at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D.C. Fr. Nicholas spends his leisure time reading, doing jigsaw puzzles, listening to music, and experimenting in the kitchen.

Matushka Mary is a senior speech-language pathologist with over 20 years of experience in schools, hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, and outpatient settings. She is originally from Arlington, TX, but has

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WELCOME FR. NICHOLAS & FAMILY!

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traipsed with Fr. Nicholas across the United States over the past 22 years - together they have lived in 14 different places in eight different states. She currently works at Ally Behavior Center in Rockville, MD. Matushka Mary enjoys reading, cross-stitching, and being the test subject for Fr. Nicholas's kitchen experiments.

They have three children, Eddie, Dylan, and Aubreigh, all of whom love soccer, video games, and making new friends. Eddie loves being of service and finding ways to be helpful, as well as building things such as Legos and jigsaw puzzles. Dylan is particularly interested in STEM activities, such as robotics and programming, as well as cooking. Aubreigh is a voracious reader, loves music, and can never wait to show everyone her newest gymnastics move. The entire family enjoys outdoor activities such as traveling, hiking, and camping, and looks forward to pizza and movie night all week long.

SHADY GROVE BENEFIT GALA 2024

The Shady Grove Pregnancy Center Invites You to Attend Our

Benefit Gala 2024

“Stand Up for Life”

featuring comedian Mike Goodwin

Friday, October 25, 2024 6:00 pm

Bethesda North Marriott Hotel and Conference Center
5967 Executive Boulevard North Bethesda, MD 20852

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Cash, Check, or Charge



In addition to a fun-filled night of great food and laughter, you'll hear inspiring stories of clients who walked into the Shady Grove Pregnancy Center uncertain of their future, only to find hope and life changing support.

Mike Goodwin is a refreshingly funny comedian, speaker, and leader. His signature bowtie represents his expectation-defying brand of comedy that leaves an audience laughing hysterically and completely inspired.



**Please RSVP by
October 7, 2024**

Fr. Gregory would like to host a table of 10 as we have done in the past. Please let him know if you'd like to attend!

BAZAAR 2024 UPDATE

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Fall is upon us. Many have asked about the St. Mark Annual Bazaar and Food Festival. To that, many things are going on in our church building. Contractors are replacing the fire alarm and communication systems, which were damaged by lightning strikes last year. Because it is being replaced, we are required to bring it all up to current code standards. The total redesign demands more sensors, smoke detectors, and alarm annunciators to be installed and connected throughout the building. This complex and time-consuming work is expected to be completed within the next month. Once completed, St. Mark can then schedule the annual inspection of the elevator and fire control systems that have been out of compliance since the lightning strikes. Those who have attended services during the summer months have been aware of the wide spread problems with the A/C and climate control. We have been working with contractors and consultants to determine the root cause. Our aging HVAC units cover many zones across the building and are currently being evaluated for repair or replacement strategies by several vendors.

On another level, two proposals were put forth by the parish community at large at our spring semi-annual meeting. First, a resolution was passed to cancel the Annual Bazaar. The second resolution called for consideration of other potential events for the Bazaar weekend. Given the facility issues that could affect our ability to obtain the special event permit from the county along with a lack of consensus around an event concept; the Parish Council decided not to run a fall event in 2024. This has not been an easy decision. The Annual Bazaar and Food Festival provides many opportunities for Church fellowship, is an important part of our presence in the local community, and typically generates a good portion of our annual income.

In the absence of a Bazaar, each of us should prayerfully consider by what other ways we could serve our Church and our neighboring community. We welcome your suggestions and input as we continue to re-evaluate options that may best fit our current parish community's goals and strengths. In the short term, as we approach the holidays and close of the year, please consider making an additional donation possibly reflecting what you might have spent or donated at the bazaar, to help offset our income deficit.

Many thanks to all who have contributed to and labored toward the success of our outreach and fund raising efforts.

On Behalf of the St. Mark Parish Council,

In Christ,
Thomas Jenkins

A LITURGICAL LOOK-AHEAD

Submitted by Jill L. Stevens

Wanting to participate more fully in our liturgical life, I've attempted here to anticipate the rhythm of our church calendar. The cycles of fasts and feasts that cause us to bless fruit, dye eggs, and process with candles also beckon us into a deeper communion with God and with each other as a community of the faithful. I drafted the following for my own edification; I offer it in the hope that it may also provide some insights for others. - Jill L. Stevens

Cycles of Orthodox Worship - Christmas Cycle

A RECURRING SERIES

This is the first installment of recurring series, which is designed to anticipate, appreciate, and explore the meaning and beauty of the Orthodox liturgical year. At a summary level, this series of quarterly articles will discuss some of the more salient aspects of the coming several months and suggest readings to help us further examine topics relevant to this part of the liturgical calendar. As relevant, it will also include reminders of how to prepare for special feasts, fasts, and other important events on the horizon.

Looking ahead, the highlight of the coming months is surely the nativity of Jesus Christ – Christmas. In the Orthodox tradition, Christmas day is part of an integrated cycle of related events. The “Christmas Cycle” starts in November and ends in January and includes Advent, the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, the Nativity, and the Epiphany.

Advent comprises the 40-day period of preparation for the Nativity, during which time we fast as part of our spiritual discipline and worship. The fast begins on November 15th and lasts until Christmas day, when we break the fast with the celebration of the birth of Christ on December 25th. As noted in Fr. Hopko’s *The Orthodox Faith* (Vol II – Worship), two “special preparatory days announcing the approaching birth of the Saviour” occur during this period: Saint Andrew’s Day (November 30) and Saint Nicholas Day (December 6). Special songs are sung on these days, announcing and celebrating Christ’s coming birth:

Adorn yourself, O Cavern. Make ready, O Manger. O Shepherds and wisemen, bring your gifts and bear witness. For the Virgin is coming bearing Christ in her womb
(Vespertal Hymn of Saint Nicholas Day).

Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple. During Advent, we also celebrate one of the 12 great feasts of the liturgical year, the entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple. On November 21st, a special festal service tells the story of how Mary as a young child

(Continued on next page.)

A LITURGICAL LOOK-AHEAD

Continued from Previous

was brought to the temple by her parents, Joachim and Anna, where she would live as part of the temple community until her betrothal to Joseph. Celebration of Mary's entrance into the temple harkens back to the miraculous circumstances of her own conception and birth and pre-figures her role as the mother of God, the humble human woman who gives birth to the incarnate God, Jesus Christ.

Christmas, another of the 12 great feasts of the year, probably needs the least explanation, as it's a holiday that's widely recognized and celebrated. In the Orthodox tradition, the Advent fast heightens our appreciation of Christmas and helps us to prepare spiritually to celebrate the miraculous event of Christ's birth, when God elects to become man. The Vigil of Christmas comprises special worship services that span Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. While the practices of individual churches vary, our liturgical calendar and rubrics call Old Testament readings that underscore the ancient prophecies heralding Christ's birth – notably in Micah and Isaiah. In the embodied Christ, "God is with us." On Christmas Day, readings and songs celebrate the coming of Christ, who is sent by God the Father to join, love, inspire, and ultimately redeem humanity.

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So through God, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir (Gal 4.4–7).

Epiphany. The Christmas Cycle continues through the Epiphany, also called Theophany, when Christ is baptized by St. John the Baptist and his godliness shines forth and is made manifest. As the last of the three great feast days that occur during this part of the liturgical year, epiphany on January 6th marks a dramatic moment when Christ is revealed to be one of the Divine Trinity. During his baptism, the sound of the voice of God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove reveal Christ's divinity--the manifestation, in Christ, of God on earth. Christ's baptism mystically anticipates Christ's actual death and resurrection as well as his power to redeem and "resurrect" humanity and the fallen world.

Recommended Readings

- Celebrating the 12 Days of Christmas: A Family Devotional in the Eastern Orthodox Tradition, Amanda Eve Wigglesworth
- Daily Vitamins for Spiritual Growth: Day by Day with Jesus through the Church Year, Anthony M. Coniaris*

(Continued on next page.)

A LITURGICAL LOOK-AHEAD

Continued from Previous

- Daily Meditations and Prayers for the Christmas Advent Fast and Epiphany, Presbytera Emily Harakas and Fr. Anthony Coniaris*
- Let All Rejoice: Reflections for Advent, the Nativity, and Epiphany, Fr. Stavros N. Akrotirianakis*
- Mary as the Early Christians Knew Her: The Mother of Jesus in Three Ancient Texts, Frederica Mathewes-Greene
- Meditations for Advent: Preparing for Christ's Birth, Vassilios Papavassiliou
- On the Incarnation, St. Athanasius with an Introduction by C.S. Lewis
- The Season of Christmas, Constance J. Tarasar (Part of the "Feast & Families" series that focuses on activities for children and families)
- Welcoming the Christ Child: Family Readings for the Nativity Lent, Elissa Bjeletich
- Seasons of Grace: Reflections on the Orthodox Church Year, Donna Farley
- The Winter Pascha, Fr. Thomas Hopko
- When You Fast: The Why and How of Christian Self-Discipline, L. Joseph Letendre

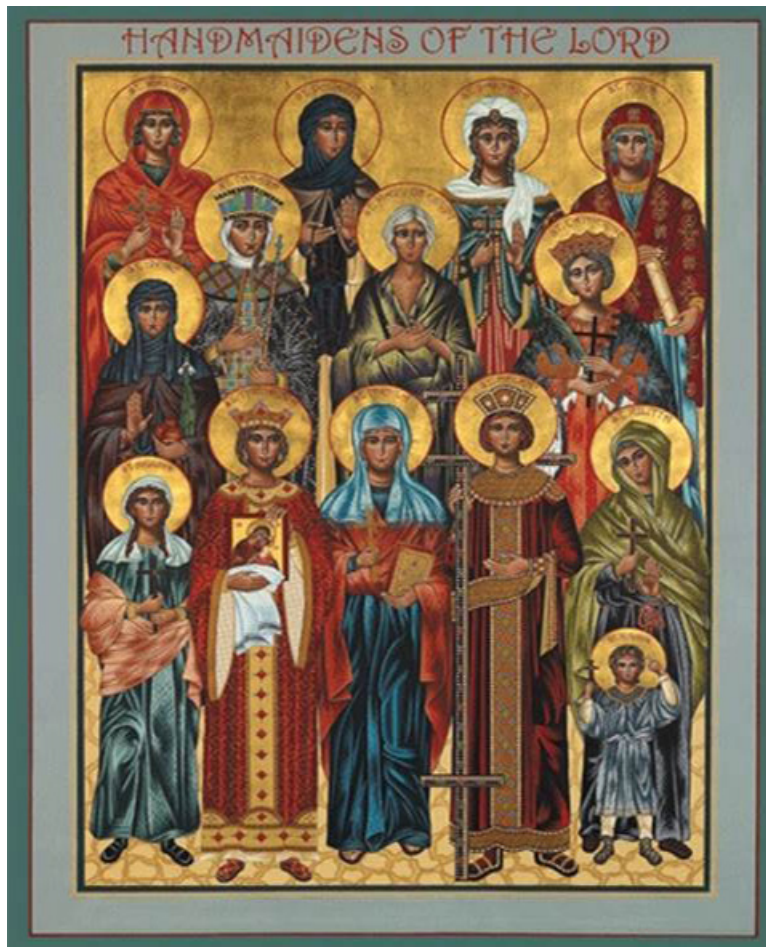
*These books are currently out of print but come highly recommended by a St. Mark friend. You may be able to find copies at your favorite library, used bookstore, Amazon, Thrift Books or in our own St. Mark library.

HANDMAIDENS

Submitted by Marcella Hydock

A huge Thank You to our current Handmaidens: Ivana, Kaitlyn, Aubreigh, Abiah, Caroline, Bella, and Danni. Their ministry includes taking turns cutting the holy bread that is distributed to the parish following holy communion and at the end of Divine Liturgy.

They also serve the holy bread and wine to communicants following communion.





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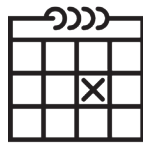
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- ◆ Follow the prompts to fill in your personal and credit card information. Subsequent giving will happen automatically unless you change it.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

GROCERY CARDS Please consider donating grocery cards for the needy all, and especially, through-out the Nativity season! Please see Father Gregory for questions or donations. Thank you!!

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

ST. MARK WOMEN’S BOOK GROUP will meet the first Tuesday of each month at 7:15 p.m. via Zoom. Watch this space for possible date changes. The next 3 books for discussion are:

- Oct. 3 - “*The Invention of Wings*” by Sue Monk Kidd
- Nov. 7 - “*Cloistered: My Years as a Nun*” by Catherine Coldstream
- Dec. 5 - “*My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She’s Sorry*” by Fredrik Backman

Zoom links will be sent out the day before each meeting.

UPCOMING FEASTS:

- Protection of the Theotokos - Divine Liturgy - Tuesday, October 1st - 10:00 am
- Entrance of the Theotokos - Divine Liturgy - Thursday, November 21st - 10:00 am
- St. Nicholas - Divine Liturgy - Friday, December 6th - 10:00 am
- St. Herman - Divine Liturgy - Friday, December 13th - 10:00 am
- Nativity - Christmas Eve - Vigil - Tuesday, December 24th - 7:00 pm
- Christmas Day - Wednesday, December 25th - 9:30 am
- New Years Day - Circumcision of Our Lord -Wednesday, January 1st - 9:30 am

IT’S JUST BREAKFAST A group of our St. Mark men meet for breakfast every 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month. Questions? See David Jefferson or Mark Phinney. Thank you!

BLESSED MAT. OLGA OF ALASKA WOMEN’S PRAYER GROUP

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 meet on the 3rd Tuesday of the month @10:30 a.m. to pray an Akathist virtually. 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, OCT. 1st, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, NOV. 5th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, DEC. 3rd, 10:30 AM

Akathist Dates & Times:

- TUESDAY, OCT. 15th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, NOV. 19th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, DEC. 17th, 10:30 AM

UPDATER

Memory Eternal!

7/17/2024 - Marge German



May Their Memory Be Eternal!



Weddings

8/31/24 - John Sokich and Cathy Walker

May God Grant Them Many Years!

Happy Birthday!

October

1 Michael Joseph Ruzila
 2 Michael Lungociu
 4 Warren Miller
 Matthew Tucker
 Amelia Safchuk
 Paula Zabela
 5 John McCamant
 6 Alexander Barge
 Paul Dean
 Philip Hydock
 7 Mark Needham
 Greg Yakubik
 8 Ionel Baleanu
 Julia Wickard
 10 Marie Petro-Jenkins
 11 Frank Dellermann
 14 Betselot Bezuneh
 15 Cristin Kumar
 Tammy Jacobsen
 Yeshimebet Samara
 16 Oleg Jankovic
 17 Martha Baxtresser
 18 Dean Balamaci
 Nikolay Korokhov
 22 Liam Church
 23 Lori Hottle
 24 William Hardy
 Francisco Salas
 25 Jack Ryan Ruzila
 26 Andrew Yakubik
 27 Steven Kreta
 29 Nina Bilyeu
 31 Wayne Tatusko

November

1 Diana Haverlack
 2 Christina Sokich
 3 Jessica Beddow
 5 Jane (Ihnat) Cessna
 Mat. Ann Prentice
 6 Alexander Jankovic
 Susie Needham
 7 Dn. David Phelps
 Karen Phinney
 Patricia Rodak
 Brian Zabela
 9 Zachary Firestone
 10 Michael Kopcha
 Sonya LeFors
 Alexander Safchuk
 11 Andrea Phelps
 12 Abigail Dean
 Walter Laurie
 13 Michelle (Rodak) Weaver
 14 Mark Lungociu
 15 David Holovac
 16 Kaitlin Brooke Meyers
 17 John Bilyeu, Jr.
 Connor Alexander Ruzila
 18 Claire German
 20 Mka. Mary Roth
 21 Matthew Balamaci
 Gregory Mitchum
 22 Deborah Firestone
 23 Sarah Borger
 Dn. Matthew Prentice
 25 John Thomas Sedor
 28 Samantha Pearson
 30 Helen Kerch

December

1 Tatyana Gleason
 Nino Japaridze Henning
 3 Daniel Nakshin
 Tina Parrish
 5 Theresa Sekellick
 6 Rebekah Barber
 Victor Lutes
 8 Kyla Prentice
 Marie Wickard
 9 Linda Marie Jackson
 11 Simeon Tatusko
 12 Olga Uritskaya
 13 Ivan Borissow
 Micah Needham
 14 David Markovich
 Timothy Petro
 15 Howard Guba
 16 Patricia Koopersmith
 17 Christopher German
 Jesse Henning
 Catherine Miller
 18 Jenifer Calomiris
 Darren Tucker
 19 Elizabeth Sedor
 Marsha Zellem
 20 Anne Tucker
 21 Nicholas Masick
 Steven Sekellick
 22 Caroline German
 Elaine (Petro) O'Halloran
 Mat. Christina Perry
 23 Eugene Borissow
 Audrey Henning
 Alexander Landsburg
 Matthew Tatusko
 Andrew Tucker
 24 Sophie Christine Balan
 Philip Navarro
 25 Mat. Janet Koczak
 Margaret McCamant
 26 Marina McKee
 28 Cristian Ciubotaru
 29 Alexander Sokich
 31 Wayne Cessna
 Charles Datch

