

Pastor's Report for 2018

Snapshot statistics

Baptisms = 8

Chrismations = 4

Funerals = 2

Orthodox moving into and out of our parish community (net total) = +1

2018 was a productive year at Dormition. While we continue to improve and beautify both our space and our use of it, my sense is that we have settled in, and that we now feel “at home” as a community. This is good, particularly because we are seeing a steady stream of visitors come through our doors on an almost weekly basis now, and the settledness of our community positively effects the quality of our hospitality. Quite a few people who have visited our church in recent months have written to me afterward expressing their gratitude at the warm welcome and sense of comfort they felt during their visit. I give thanks to God for your faithfulness in welcoming the stranger.

We also receive frequent inquiries about Orthodoxy through our social media presence. I interact with a number of people through our parish Facebook page, some of whom have reached out to me personally for further details about the Orthodox faith. This year I began to record and publish the homilies and reflections I offer at most services. I have been very surprised at the amount of interest in those recordings outside the parish.

I continue to offer catechetical classes, Bible study-type classes, and book studies throughout the year, some of which are recorded and posted to our Facebook page and/or the parish Youtube account, for the benefit of those inside and outside our community. I am also involved in the pan-Orthodox college and young adult ministries in our area. I am the chaplain for the Old Dominion University OCF, participate in the annual OCF retreat at William & Mary, and lead discussions at the very popular Orthodoxy on Tap several times each year. I am also involved in our very active Orthodox clergy brotherhood, in which all the Orthodox parishes in Hampton Roads, save one, participate. We meet monthly for a meal, hosted by a different priest/parish each time, to discuss and coordinate our efforts on an individual and pan-Orthodox level.

Looking ahead, this year presents us with a couple of significant events to look forward to. First, the design for our altar has been finalized and we are sourcing the material to fabricate it at the moment. This will be the first time in the history of our parish that we have had a real, purpose built altar. We are growing up! A specific timeline isn't available but I expect to have it installed before the end of Spring, in time for Archbishop Alexander to consecrate it when he comes to visit us for the feast of Dormition in August. This is the second major event on our communal horizon. We have invited the entire Appalachian Deanery to be with us for the feast of Dormition on August 14-15, to concelebrate with the Archbishop as he marks our Feast and consecrates our new altar. We are even planning to surprise His Eminence with the gift

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of a new set of vestments. In light of this I think it is appropriate that our focus for this year be on our liturgical life.

I would like for us to have improving our liturgical life as our main goal in 2019. In order to set the tone for this I am starting with what I, personally, have responsibility for: the altar and servers. I want every boy and young man in our parish to feel confident that he can serve in the holy altar in a manner that is worthy of our Lord. I intend to teach them how and encourage them to grow in that responsibility. In addition to this, we will have Vigil, rather than just Great Vespers, for each of the major feasts this year, starting with the Meeting of the Lord on February 2nd. Obviously there is work to be done by singers and readers as well so that the quality of what we offer to God is the best that we have. But even those who have no liturgical responsibility during the services have something of inestimable importance to offer: your presence. I have offered services where the church almost empty and, obviously, services wherein it was full. The grace of God is present in the services regardless of how many come to receive it, but there is definitely something added by your presence, a vivacity and dynamism that genuinely contributes to the quality of the service. I encourage each individual and family to make it their goal to increase their liturgical participation during 2019. If, in the past, you have only come on Sunday morning, try to come to Saturday evening as well. If you have never come to feast day services, look at the wall calendar and plan ahead to attend some of them. In whatever way you are able to make a small improvement in your attendance know that it is an improvement, not just for you, but for the entire community.

As your pastor I am proud of the steps we have taken as a community in the past 7 years. Much remains to be done but the sacrifice and commitment of so many is bearing fruit, and, with God's blessing, I believe it will continue to do so. I look forward to serving and growing with the faithful of Dormition of the Theotokos Orthodox Church in 2019 and for many years to come.