



Saint Innocent of Alaska Orthodox Mission

Mailing Address - 15 Farone Drive, Apt. F35, Oneonta, NY 13820

Chapel Address - 305 Main Street, Oneonta, NY 13820

stinnocentmission.org

Rev. Vasil Dubee, Rector

September 10th, 2019

**His Eminence, the Most-Reverend +MICHAEL
Archbishop of New York and the
Diocese of New York and New Jersey**

Most Reverend and dear Vladyko,

Master bless! Nearly four years ago, I was assigned to St. Innocent of Alaska Orthodox Mission and celebrated my first Divine Liturgy here on the feast of St. Nicholas of Myra, 2015. On December 1ST, 2019, I will celebrate four years serving here in Oneonta. In reflecting back, I am reminded of how Our Lord has greatly blessed our parish these past few years. In this letter, Your Eminence, I wish to share our joy with you and tell you of all the good things that are happening in Oneonta, New York.

Liturgical Life - Since my assignment began, it became an immediate priority to establish a stable, consistent and full schedule of services that the parish did not previously have. The Saturday evening Vespers service begins at 5PM with confessions heard before and after. Our usual weekly attendance is 10 faithful at Vespers. Sunday begins with the 3RD and 6TH Hours at 9:30AM and Divine Liturgy at 10:00AM. Each week, we have an attendance ranging from 20 to 35 people. Most Sunday's we have high 20's or low 30's. Immediately following the Divine Liturgy on Sundays, adult education is held during fellowship hour. We grace many topics from proper prayer and Church etiquette, fasting, moral theology and lives of the Saints. The discussions are always engaging and very positive with time for questions and answers. Parishioners also are welcome to request a topic for the following week's session. Our Church School program has also undergone changes in approach. The majority of our children are from age 5 to 1 year old. They are learning how to pray the prayers of the Church and are taught the Feasts by coloring their own icons. Our older children, from age 11 to 16 attend our adult education program and we also have two weeks a month when the education

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discussion is directed toward topics they encounter at their age. All of these have received very positive responses from children from all age groups.

Concerning Feast Days - Vespers and the Divine Liturgy have been served on every Great Feast of the year and on most lower ranking Feasts, especially those of the North American Saints, our patron Saint Innocent, the Prophet and Forerunner John the Baptist, and the Twelve Apostles. The parish has also observed a full cycle of Lenten services including Presanctified Liturgy, The Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, Lenten Moleben and Panakhyda services and a packed Holy Week and Pascha. This year's 2019 Pascha, we had our largest attendance in my time here with 64 faithful. On the feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos, 2019, we had a record attendance of 35. This has so far been the highest attendance for any Feast that fell during the work week (aside from the Nativity of Our Lord).

Our families/Membership - St. Innocent Mission has currently 40 members that are active and in good standing with the Orthodox Church.

Receptions into Holy Orthodoxy - Since my arrival in Oneonta in December of 2015, there have been the following baptisms, chrismations and reception by confession of faith:

2016 - Lynn Vasily Warner II (infant baptism)

2017 - Amy C. Djurdjevich (Chrismation)

2018 - Andrew Tilke (adult baptism), Nestor Dubee (infant baptism)

2019 - Gina Ksenya Tilke (Chrismation), Frank Stephen Tilke (Chrismation),
Mary Davidson - (Chrismation), Nicholas Davidson (Chrismation),

Parker James Davidson - (infant baptism), Bennett Steven Davidson (infant baptism), Mary El Hakam - (Holy Confession and confession of faith)

At the present time, our Mission has one additional catechumen preparing for holy illumination and reception into the Faith. We are hopeful that this person's family will follow them as they attend together regularly.

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Funerals and Burials - There have been three funerals since my arrival in 2015: Anna Hein - 2017, Paul Michael Warner - 2018, Katherine Warner - 2019

Weddings - Our first wedding in the history of our Mission took place on September 21st, 2019 joining Milan and Amy Djurdjevich in Holy Matrimony.

Finances - Our current balances are:

General Operating Fund - \$16,278.00

Building Fund/Capital Campaign - \$26,263.00

Land Donation and Matching Grant - In January of 2017, a local charity organization made a donation to St. Innocent of Alaska Orthodox Mission for the purchase of our land where we plan to build the future church. The donation was for the entire price of the cost of the land, a ten-acre parcel for \$32,000. The purchase was donated in full by the Lindsay A. and Olive B. O'Connor Foundation of Delhi, NY. The same foundation has also given to us a matching grant for all money earned towards our building fund to help with the costs of our future church construction. The matching grant matches up to \$10,000 and is available for indefinite renewal until the future construction of our church building is completed. This is a great help to us to say the least.

Ethnic Food Sales - We have been selling Slovak and Ukrainian style foods throughout the year with all proceeds going towards our building fund. All of the foods are home made by our parishioners and our host parish, St. James' Episcopal Church allows us to use their kitchen for the preparation of all the food.

SUNY Campus Outreach - During the academic year, St. Innocent Mission is present at all the community events at the SUNY Oneonta Campus in effort to reach out to the college students. The parish has information pamphlets on Orthodoxy and just by our presence, we have had 4 students grace us with their presence. It is our ultimate goal to have enough Orthodox students involved to begin officially an OCF chapter (depending on enrollment numbers of course).

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Hartwick College Seminary Institute - Each year, Hartwick Seminary holds their annual Theological Institute at Hartwick College. I have taken part and taught classes every year since my assignment in Oneonta. St. Innocent Mission has made some friendships at Hartwick and I have been invited back for a 4th year to teach classes.

Otsego County Center for Continuing Adult Learning - The Otsego County Center for Continuing Adult Learning is another center of outreach through education that St. Innocent Mission has been a part of since 2016. We began with our Ukrainian Easter Egg classes and the following session, I was invited to teach a class on Orthodox Iconography and church architecture. This has continued each year since 2016.

Local Newspaper Column - The local newspaper, The Daily Star has given us a monthly column to write general articles about the Orthodox Faith. This has helped our parish grow in local popularity. Many residents of Oneonta did not previously know an Orthodox parish was here and have come to services throughout the year. Though many have not officially become members, they are still a part of our community.

Canned food drive - Our parish regularly donates non-perishable food items to a local food center that provides hot meals daily for those less fortunate.

Music project - Our parish does not have a choir director and after much time of searching, we decided to take a different approach to our liturgical music. Our parish has adopted the practice of congregational singing lead by our cantor, Reader Vasily Warner. Both he and I have taken on the task of transcribing liturgical music melodies according to the Carpathian, Galician and Kyivan traditions and putting them on paper for every service. We have compiled very formal, uniformed music books that make the singing easy for everyone and are currently in the process of proofreading the texts for our congregation books. During the Divine services, all who wish to sing join in praising God. A milestone was reached this Pascha 2019, as it was the first Pascha that we did not need to

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request help from a more experienced choir director or cantor outside of our parish. All of the services for the entire year, Pascha included, were sung by our congregation, lead by our cantor.

Visitation to St. George Orthodox Church in Taylor, PA - In October 2018, we made a parish visit to the Church of St. George the Victorious in Taylor, Pennsylvania and attended the moleben to the myrrh-streaming icon of the Theotokos "Kardiotissa". I was given the honor of concelebrating the moleben with Archpriest Mark Leisure and other clergy. Transportation for our entire parish was provided by students of SUNY Delhi Campus, and we are planning to make our third visit on October 9th, 2019.

St. Andrew Orthodox Brotherhood - St. Innocent Mission became a member of the St. Andrew Orthodox Brotherhood of the Capital Region and hosted Mission Vespers on the Sunday evening of St. Mary of Egypt 2019. Our Mission provided a lenten meal following the service and a great time was had by all. We are looking forward towards the upcoming gatherings next year.

Chapel Beautification - After many years of service, our altar linens were in need of being properly disposed of. Our parish purchased a set of each color for the liturgical year to beautify our chapel. The linens were made in Ukraine and we received them for a very affordable price. In addition to the new altar linens, I have been utilizing my knowledge of carpentry to beautify our chapel with wooden icon frames, trimming our altar table with decorative mouldings and crosses and currently am building new analogions. Our parish received a relic of St. Alexis of Wilkes-Barre this past August 2019 and a beautiful icon was purchased from Legacy Icons.

Hiring of Architects - Earlier this month, we signed a contract with Jaeger, Nikolas, Kuhlman & Associates (JNKA), a Chicago-based architectural firm to begin the preliminary stages of designing a future church. The first stages include graphic image renderings and early-stage plans for the church to be built in the future. Having these plans will enable us to not only step up the process of our

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fundraising, but also to apply for grants towards the cost of our worship space. This is a great step forward in the life of our Mission.

Reorganization and Parish Council - Our parish was blessed this year with a surge of volunteers to carry out everyday operations in a more organized manner. Weekly volunteers are now planning for the month, the readings of the hours, the epistle, fellowship hour and general cleaning of the chapel. We also have three newly elected parish council members. Mary Davidson has been elected as Parish Treasurer, Amy Djurdjevich as Parish Secretary and Reader Vasily Warner as Parish Council President and a total of 7 active parish council members.

In closing, I cannot forget all of the people who have helped our Mission to reach this point and continue to work in the Lord's Vineyard. I want to thank the Diocese of New York and New Jersey and the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors for all of the prayers and financial support they have given and continue to so lovingly give to St. Innocent of Alaska Orthodox Mission. Without this financial aid, it would not be possible for our Mission to effectively function or to even exist. I thank all of the clergy and laity of the diocese that continually remember our Mission in their prayers and the clergy of the New York State Deanery who have helped our Mission in our times of need. Last, but certainly not least, I thank you, Your Eminence, for your continued fatherly love, prayers and kindness towards our Mission and all of the Mission parishes of our diocese. Words cannot truly express my gratitude but regardless I thank you. I assure you of our prayers for you as you continue to lead our diocese as our hierarch, constantly showing us the example that Our Lord Jesus Christ taught.

Εἰς πολλὰ ἔτη, Δέσποτα! Многії літа, Владико! Many years, Master!

Sincerely yours in Jesus Christ,

Presbyter Vasil Dubee

Rector of St. Innocent of Alaska Orthodox Mission

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