

# Jacob's well

Autumn 2007

*"Give me this water, that I may not thirst..." John 4:15*

## How Can We Get There From Here?



*Orthodox Church in America • Diocese of Washington and New York*

Autumn 2007

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*"Give me this water, that I may not thirst..." John 4:15*



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Deadline for next issue – February 1, 2008

# How Can We Get There From Here?

by Fr. John Shimchick

**In this issue it is our intent to explore the potential and reality of two words: here and there.**

It has been five years since our last published issue of *Jacob's Well* and much has happened within our Diocese and our Orthodox Church in America (OCA). We have undergone a financial crisis and reorganization within our Diocese and are in the midst of the resolution of another and greater financial crisis and reorganization within the OCA. We have been drawn in to the smaller and more manageable worlds of our individual parishes, with less and less anticipation of support and direction from the broader Church. This is where we are at right now, it's our "here" and perhaps we could remain indefinitely in this position if we must. But it is not an enviable place from which to move forward. It is a holding pattern, a mode of self-preservation; it is what one does in order just to survive.

This is where we are right now, but it need not be our destiny. If we must admit where we are it is so that we might affirm the possibilities of where we could be, of what is the calling not just of individual parishes but of the vision of our Orthodox Church in America. It is so that we could remind each other that the broader Church is still worth caring about, and "that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith" (*Romans 1:12*).

For the time being we must leave certain matters regarding the crisis within the OCA to the authority of our Holy Synod of Bishops, working with the Metropolitan Council. Yet, while so much may seem to be beyond the control or power of individual parishioners or parishes, much of the incentive for moving forward, for getting "there" is already taking place by individual people and within particular parishes.

Our last issue from 2003, available only online, sought to develop the themes from Leo Tolstoy's story, "Three Questions." When is the best time to do each thing? Who are the most important people to work with? What is the most important thing to do at all times? In the story, a certain king was willing to offer a great reward to anyone who could provide him the answers. A number of people came forward, but not satisfied with any of their responses he decided to consult

a hermit well known for his wisdom. Since the hermit would only receive common folk, the king took off his crown, put on simple clothes, left his bodyguard behind, and entering the woods to the hermit's cell alone he encountered the hermit and certain events that would forever change him.

You can read the whole story on our website, but here's what he learned from the hermit concerning the questions of when, who, and what: "There is only one time that is important – Now! It is the most important time because it is the only time when we have any power. The most necessary man is he with whom you are, for no man knows whether he will ever have dealings with any one else: and the most important affair is, to do him good, because for that purpose alone was man sent into this life!"

So our goal in this issue and all those to come is a commitment to presenting the examples already taking place within our Diocese of how WE CAN get there from here. We welcome information of activities taking place within parishes, and the reflections of our parishioners. We will seek to review events, utilizing our Diocesan website to remain current, and also to examine broader themes found within literature, poetry, and film. We aim to be a vehicle for transmitting the transparency and openness of Diocesan administration and financial records.

Above all, in relaying as honestly as possible the reality of where we are, we hope to be a means of hope in examining the path of where we can be.



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*"You can't get  
there  
from here."*

**(Ogden Nash,  
1957)**

*"There is only  
one time that  
is important  
– Now!"*

# The Atlantic City Rescue Mission

by William R. Southrey

**The agency in which I serve is the Atlantic City Rescue Mission, which is a place that gathers in the community's lost and lonely homeless people.**

In terms of Tolstoy's story, *"Three Questions,"* in which a king asks for wisdom in discerning the right time to begin everything, the right people to listen to, and the most important thing to do, the Mission is a wondrous place through which we have the opportunity to learn such profound lessons. Everyday, we serve men, women, and mothers with children who have been broken by the pressures of this world, whether by the transgressions of others, or by choices that they have made themselves. For whatever reason, they have become disenfranchised from society, utterly hopeless, and in many cases, very near to death.

The right time at the Mission is always now, because the people come through the doors in such a condition that necessitates immediate attention. They need hope – now. This presents a considerable challenge to busy staff members that are already providing care to hundreds of others in the course of a day. The Mission is unique in that it offers hope, in its purest form, to people who have no hope. The hope exists in the many and vast lessons in life that shape up our innermost parts, our souls, into the proper image – that of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

*"Our man needed the touch of human hands  
and the compassion of their hearts. "*

Such pure hope is realized through the process of theosis, that innate desire to partake of the divine nature; the desire to know intimately that God became man that man may become god. It is what we offer to those broken souls that end up at the Mission, and it is why we do what we do. We must do it when the opportunity presents itself, which is often; we must recognize that "I" am the right person to offer the hope because I'm with the person now; and I must offer the most important thing, the hope, in order to bring goodness and life immediately to the soul before me that currently has no hope and is facing death.

At the Mission, we have many stories that demonstrate Tolstoy's questions. One in particular happened during this past winter, which was very severe and brought us many more people to care for. A man that came to us with feet so frozen that they were literally dying off of his limbs, put staff members to the test. This man was sent to the Mission from a hospital in another county of New Jersey that gave him some medical attention, but they sent him to us for further care because he was indigent and couldn't pay his medical bills. The Mission is not a medical facility, so we addressed his needs the best we could.

We discovered right away that the hospital had left the man's frozen feet attached to his warm body, and they were dying slowly, painfully on him. They blackened and became gangrenous, full of dead tissue, and a pungent odor. This poor man was given to us with no help, no hope, and it seemed at that point, no immediate opportunity to get the help he desperately needed. He was from Poland and did not speak English well, which also presented a language barrier.

As I observed staff members attempting to care for the man, I noticed that they were most concerned at first about the overpowering odor from his dying feet that turned their stomachs and the potential transmission of disease. I understood their concerns, however, a person who needed

care and encouragement was attached to the black ugliness.

This is what unfolded: Our man needed help from us "now." He needed the touch of human hands and the compassion of their hearts. One staff member, although still concerned about his own well being, donned some gloves and began to redress the man's feet. Quickly he learned that he had to be extremely careful, because the toes were about to snap off and any pressure on the feet caused them to bleed profusely. Soon a transformation took place in both men. They could feel

# The Atlantic City Rescue Mission

the love that was not just of their own hearts, but also of the very heart of God. I even witnessed glances of appreciation between them. That staff member realized that the immediate time, "the now," was the most important time to love and care for an ailing and rejected man with body parts withering and dying before his own eyes.

The decision to provide help had a ripple effect. A man in a bed nearby suffering in another way with stage four Hodgkin's lymphoma, began to assist by cutting bandages and tape to apply to the feet. Just moments earlier he had been complaining about the very presence of our new guest because of the stench. Soon another staff member came over to help, and still another took it upon himself to check in on the man on days off to ensure his proper care.

All of these staff members, to speak to Tolstoy's second question, became the right people for this man. And the man was the most important person for them at that moment as well. Sure, staff members went on to care for many others throughout the day and into the following days. No doubt they were challenged by others to make their hearts respond in the fondest way, and in the most genuine and loving way to each person, at every moment. It's a constant opportunity, and if we don't take time for it we risk completely missing the goodness we might present to another who may be someone to learn from, someone in whom we see ourselves, and someone in whom we can see the image of God.

Finally in the third question, Tolstoy presents the purpose, which is to do good for one another. What drove those Mission staff members to put aside themselves and care for the man that had thrown them back repulsed? It was the desire to fulfill the purpose of doing good to another. They had learned to do what is good in love. They had learned to offer hope in its purest form to another, so they might know intimately that God became man that man may become God, and that our God has done so in goodness and love for us. What might have happened if God waited to receive just one person? It would have crushed our hope.

I challenge you to take this to heart and look at the person with you right now. Realize that this is the most important person in your pres-

ence right now. Offer him or her some goodness, because now is your right moment to do so!

**For more information about the Atlantic City Rescue Mission, call 609-345-5517.**

**If you would like to make a donation, a check may be made payable to the Atlantic City Rescue Mission, P.O. Box 5358, Atlantic City, NJ 08404.**

**Or visit our website at: [www.acrescuemission.org](http://www.acrescuemission.org).**

**Or correspond via email: [billsouthrey@acrescuemission.org](mailto:billsouthrey@acrescuemission.org)**

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*The Teen Group from the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross in Medford visited in August, 2007, and helped to prepare lunch.*

*William Southrey attends St. John Chrysostom Mission, Absecon, NJ. He is the President/CEO of the Atlantic City Rescue Mission.*

## St. Matthew House

by Fr. Ray Velencia

### Tolstoy's Three Questions Realized



#### A VISION

The genesis of St. Matthew House has its roots in a self-professed God-given vision to one of the parishioners of the Orthodox Church of St. Matthew, Maria Turley, on Holy and Great Friday, April 29, 1994. In the vision she received, Maria saw in detail the house that God wanted built. Upon sharing this vision with two fellow members, Maria was encouraged to relate her experience to me, her priest. On Tuesday, May 3, I met with Maria at her apartment wherein she disclosed the vision she had received from the Lord to build a home for physically disabled adults who are no longer able to live alone but are not in need of the services of an assisted living facility or a skilled nursing home.

In our discussion Maria, a nurse practitioner with experience in the field of rehabilitation services and a person with multiple sclerosis, pointed out that although private and public agencies in Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan region continue to develop housing programs for the chronically mentally ill, developmentally disabled, and the frail elderly, there were no existing independent living facilities in our state exclusively for adults with physical disabilities. She asked if the parish would be willing to help make the God-given vision she had received a reality. She realized that the parish which held its services in Slayton House, a local community center, and its third home since its founding in 1988 had been saving to build a church of its own.

Here I was confronted by the *"Three Questions"* – What is the most important thing to do in one's life? When should you do it, and to whom? The answers: To do what God wills with the person whom He has placed in your life at that current moment.

To house the stranger in need is clearly of the will of God and to do it to the least of these is do it to him, this I know. I know too that is something is of the will of God and we are willing cooper-

ate and struggle for it, God himself makes it happen through us. So sitting on her sofa with her in her wheel-chair facing me, I decided at that moment that together with God, I would embark on the journey of seeing Maria's self-confessed vision from God would indeed become a reality.

The first thing I did was ask Maria to write a two-page concept paper on the vision. I would present it to the Parish Council of Stewards at our upcoming May meeting. We would also discuss it on our overnight annual retreat at the beginning of June. She did. It was presented and discussed by the Council. The Council decided to forward the proposal to the parish for discussion and possible endorsement.

The vision went out and two parish meetings were held in June and August to discuss and decide what we, as a parish family, would do, if anything. On Sunday, August 14, 1994 the parish voted unanimously, with four abstentions, to sponsor the establishment of St. Matthew House. We saw and still see it as a God-given opportunity to serve the least of these in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### THE LORD ARRANGES ALL THINGS

What Maria did not know when she passed on the vision to me and to our parish family was how the Lord had arranged other details in the plan. She did know at the time that I was the Vice-President of the Central Maryland Ecumenical Council (CMEC) and a board member of the Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center & Homeless Shelter in Howard County. The Lord would use these situations in this work.

Earlier in 1994, then Governor William Schaefer through his Housing Secretary, Jacqueline Rogers, brought to the attention of the CMEC Board a state initiative for faith community-sponsored housing. This God-provided connection made the way possible for our first grant in December 1994 of \$50,000 from a brand new private Maryland foundation called Start-Up, Inc whose mission it was to help fund start-up costs for faith community-sponsored housing initiatives.

At this time, I was also an active member of Howard County's Clergy for Social Justice which was convened and chaired by a rabbi with over twenty years experience in Howard County. He kindly made the way clear for my access to Mr. Mark Sissman, the then President of the Enterprise Foundation, a national, nonprofit charitable

# St. Matthew House

organization, headquartered in Columbia. The mission of the Enterprise Foundation is to see that all low-income people in the United States have the opportunity for fit and affordable housing, moving them into the mainstream of American life. The Enterprise companies work in more than 150 locations nationally and have helped to provide more than 61,000 houses since 1981. After sharing our God-given vision with Mr. Sissman, Enterprise agreed to become our development consultant on the project.

Additionally, through a local newspaper article on our project, we were put in touch with Community Residents of Arlington, VA. Community Residents, Inc, a private, non-profit agency, has had over 25 years of experience in developing and managing residential properties and supportive programs for persons with disabilities. Upon hearing our dream, Community Residences generously and eagerly joined us in our effort. It became our cosponsor and is the present manager of our home.

These God-created and God-given circumstances, among others, played pivotal roles in helping to get the project off the ground. From this base, we proceeded to raise over \$1.5 million in grant funds for the construction of St. Matthew House. In addition to a \$50,000 capital grant contribution, The Rouse Company made the 1.25 acre parcel of land in the Kings Contrivance Village Center in Columbia available to SMHD for a nominal fee of \$28,000 as the site for St. Matthew House. Worth noting is that the appraised value of the land at the time of its construction in 1998-99 was \$400,000. Worth repeating, the home's location in the Village Center enables the residents to continue to be full and participating members of the community, just as it was envisioned.

## PARISH PARTICIPATION

Our parish and its parishioners, who now number 162 adults, have also played an important role in the formation of St. Matthew House. In addition to the prayers and monetary contributions of the parishioners, five sit on the Board of Directors. As stated earlier, two members of our parish community stepped forward to work with the Enterprise Foundation as grant writers and administrators for our project. Their skills and efforts were invaluable to the project's success.

Activity and interpersonal relations continue between the parishioners and the residents. Parishioners have given furniture and have helped the residents fix up their apartments. The residents, though of many faith backgrounds, loved having their apartments blessed. Some have ex-

pressed an interest in Orthodoxy. The parish prepares a meal for the residents once a month. Two families at a time take turns on a rotating schedule. There is also a food pantry for the residents to which parishioners contribute. When residents have been in the hospital, parishioners are there to visit.

After a visit and sharing meal brought by two parishioners in the early morning on March 6, 2002, the first resident and visionary of St. Matthew House, Maria Turley fell-asleep in the Lord. At the moment right next door to St. Matthew House, our parish family is now finishing the building of our own church building.

This brief account of the genesis and establishment of St. Matthew House is offered only in the hope that it will inspire you, the reader, to continue to be open to hearing the voice of the Lord, and then having the courage and boldness of faith to follow His instruction and lead in all areas of ministry and service. If nothing else, this testimony serves to demonstrate what can be accomplished when just a few persons commit themselves and their whole hearts to serving the Lord with and in His love as He has shown and called us to do. As can be seen with this project, He calls and directs; it is up to us to respond and follow. The results are truly to His glory!

*Fr. Ray Velencia is rector of the Orthodox Church of St. Matthew, Columbia, MD*

## St. Matthew's New Church



We hope to have the consecration of our building in 2008, the 20th anniversary of our community. The principal architect is Charles Alexander of Alexander Design in Ellicott City, Maryland. The worship space is octagonally shaped with a the dome created in the interior of the building.



*St. Matthew's New Church*

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## Fr. David Kirk and His Legacy of Hope

by Julia and Albert Raboteau

**We appreciated Fr. John Garvey's article about the late Fr. David Kirk in the Summer Issue of the Orthodox Peace Fellowship's journal "In Communion," and eagerly await Mother Nectaria McLees' interview with Fr. David soon to be published in "Road to Emmaus." Albert and I would like to take this opportunity to share our memories of him with the readers of "Jacob's Well," and to include an update on recent developments at Emmaus, the house of hospitality he founded, forty-three years ago in Harlem.**

We got to know Fr. David near the end of his life when his physical health was compromised by advanced kidney disease, but while his spirit was still as strong as iron and as gentle as silk.



*Fr. David was canonically received into the Orthodox Church in America in 2004 and attached to Saint Sergius Chapel, Syosset. He fell asleep in the Lord on May 29, 2007.*

*His obituary is available at: oca.org – "In Memoriam" sidebar.*

He was a large burly man whose speaking voice was surprisingly gentle but firm and tempered with a soft Southern accent. His manner of speaking also betrayed his Southern roots. Contrary to our linear style of speech, he spoke by circling around a topic, as if we had all the time in the world. Sitting there with him, keenly aware of his debilitated state, we were amazed at the slow richness of his talk. With great expansiveness he would delineate the actual event or person being discussed. He spoke in stories, delightfully entertaining, but craftily aimed stories. We would wonder "Where is he heading?" and suddenly be brought up short by the aptness of the comment he was making right to the point. For Father David the art of conversation was a form of communion. One drank from his "well."

After his death, Emmaus House staff and friends of Fr. David told story after story, some poignant with grief but others filled with humor. Two consistent themes kept repeating over and over. We would hear that this father had an amazing ability to forgive, to forgive all and to forgive repeatedly even those who stole from him, betrayed him and who were ungrateful to him. He always forgave, and was known to give second and third chances, a wondrous sort of hospitality to the down and out. Also, he had the ability to see in them the beauty and goodness that they often could not see in

themselves. The fruits of these two gifts have taken root in the present residents who continue running Emmaus House without him.

As we walked up the stairs to the third floor to visit him, we would pass yellowing framed photos of his mentors, Gandhi, Abbe Pierre, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dorothy Day. Her photos often had notes scribbled on them to him. When we got nestled into our seats, he would tell us what a big influence Dorothy had been on his life. It was she who encouraged him to come to New York from Alabama and she who encouraged him to go north again from the Bowery to Harlem where "the poor were." He deliberately bought a plot for himself close to her grave at Holy Resurrection Cemetery on Staten Island. It was fitting and touching that we were able to place a wreath from his grave onto hers a few paces away. He recalled that during his first days at the Catholic Worker House in New York, he simply followed her around, observing closely everything she did from peeling potatoes to welcoming guests. Finally someone observed "Kirk, you don't do any work." He told us "I was determined to model myself after Dorothy."

There is a beautiful Orthodox chapel, dedicated to Christ of the Poor, just as you come into Emmaus House. Fr. David's large black cassock still hangs on a hook on the back of the door, a reminder that this house of hospitality was led by a man of the cloth, a priestly father whose word was imbued with a spiritual dimension to heal and empower his God-given charges. Nowadays, another cassock hangs in that room, used by Father John Garvey when he comes every Thursday to hold a Vespers Service. We all gather in the small space thankful to be knit together in prayer. Fr. John's homilies respectfully and pointedly shed light on and give support to the ongoing struggle of being poor in an increasingly greedy world. Father John's gifts to us and to the house give form to passing on the spirit of his old friend's legacy. As one resident expresses it "God has his finger in this."

As Albert and I spend more time at the house making time to visit with each resident, we see how fatherly Fr. David was to a diverse and occasionally fractious community. Like all good fathers, he wanted his "children" to do well, personally challenging and directing their potential, encouraging them to reach further than they thought they could go and making these goals possible with concrete suggestions. Today, although still without a director, they are adhering to his expectations. For their person-

al growth they continue to hold an early morning community meeting, complete their daily chores, eat supper in common, attend evening education classes, pursue their GEDs, and look for a “place of hope” on weekends. As a community ministry, they maintain a weekly food pantry, provide a traveling kitchen from their van to feed the homeless, and either offer overnight hospitality or arrange referrals for those living on the streets. On a light note, Father David made a special contribution in the area of food. He often hung around the kitchen, wondering what was cooking, offering Southern recipes, and relishing Popeye’s fried chicken (Cajun-style chicken fried in cayenne pepper batter) whenever he could get it. He also watched classic black and white films with the residents. Emmaus House was a Home in every respect

Fr. David frequently spoke about the need to recall the social justice tradition of Orthodoxy, a tradition that he observed in the ancient church fathers’ adamant concern for the poor. For years he had followed the Catholic Church’s practice of the works of mercy and was especially fired up by Dorothy’s lifelong dedication to the poor as well as her commitment to the sanctity of all life. In our talks together during the last days of his life, he would return again and again to his hope that the Orthodox Church would make a similar commitment and that the model of Emmaus House could help Orthodoxy in America to recover its roots in “doing for the least of these.”

A few months ago, Albert and I became co-chairs of the Board of Directors for Emmaus House. This role has developed into a kind of interim co-directorship as well. We work closely with three residents who assume various responsibilities for the house’s day to day management, community outreach and administrative business. They are a valiant trio and help us to help them! More and more we are spending our time listening to individual residents sort through the difficulties of their own lives. Recently, we realized that we need to add “conflict resolution” sessions to our work to more directly address the complexities of living in community. Frequently we wish we could hang a sign from the clouds advertising for a full time director! We pray daily for someone who is inspired by this particular legacy, a person who feels called to bring his or her own gifts to Emmaus House’s communal life and mission to the poor. Meanwhile, it is a great joy to carry on in our limited way. Albert and I are convinced, as Fr. John Garvey puts it, that in our experience with Emmaus, we have been touched by grace.

*Julia and Albert Raboteau attend Mother of God, Joy of All Who Sorrow Mission, Princeton, NJ.*

## Jersey City Parish Celebrates 100 Years

SS Peter and Paul Church of Jersey City, NJ celebrated its 100th anniversary on May 6, 2007 as well as the completion of a five-year 1.2 million dollar restoration of the church exterior. The city of Jersey City presented a resolution during a banquet, which followed honoring the contribution of its pastors and faithful to the city, and decreed that the street where the church is located shall be named, “Saint Alexander Way” in honor of St. Alexander Hotovitsky. Three matching grants were awarded to the parish by the New Jersey Historic Trust and Preservation to assist in the restoration, and was awarded later in spring by the Jersey City Conservancy for an outstanding effort of preservation.

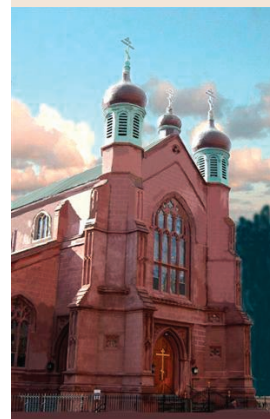
His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, celebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with the parish rector, Archpriest Joseph Lickwar, Archpriest Samuel Kedala, Dean of New Jersey, Archpriest Daniel Hubiak, previous rector of the parish, Archpriest Sergius Kuharsky, Archpriest Daniel Ressetar, Archpriest Vasily Lickwar, Archpriest Daniel Skvir, Priest Justin Paterson, Priest Hermogen Holste, Archdeacon Alexei Klimitchev and Subdeacons Gregory Sulich and Peter Ilchuk. Fathers Patterson and Holste had been attached to the parish as student interns and Fathers Skvir and Ressetar’s fathers had been rectors of the parish. The choir was led by, Alexei V. Shipovalnikov, the parish Director of Music. Father Skvir was the toastmaster at the dinner, which was also attended by Archpriests John Nehrebecki and Arkady Mironko.

Following the Divine Liturgy, His Beatitude, presented a Gramota to the parish and an icon of St. Herman to Father Joseph, and an icon of St. Herman to Alexei V. Shipovalnikov, Director of Music.

In preparation for the anniversary a fund raising program, “1907 Giving the Past a Future 2007” was launched to restore the church’s interior.

The church located in the historic neighborhood of Paulus Hook has enjoyed a long association with the Jersey City community. The Orthodox congregation in 1907 purchased the church, which was completed as the First Reformed Dutch Church in 1859 on land given in 1830 by the developers, the Jersey Associates. Among the clergy who served the Orthodox parish were: Archpriest Alexander Hotovitzky (Glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church), Archpriest John Adamiak, Archpriest Emilian Skuby, Archpriest Michael Dziama, Archpriest Dimitri Ressetar, Mitred Archpriest John Skvir, and Archpriest Daniel Hubiak. The present pastor, Very Rev. Joseph Lickwar was appointed rector in 1991.

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## Lessons in Life & Love

by Stephanie Skuby

**The average person driving down Ashford Center Road on a summer morning is likely to be puzzled by the people dressed in happy costumes such as fairies, elves, ladybugs, and the like on the side of the road. Still more bewildering might be the fact that these creatures are dancing along the road carrying colorful signs encouraging motorists to honk their horns. But to the child whose car turns into the usually inconspicuous driveway nestled amongst the greenery of a Connecticut road, these “characters” signal the start of a week that has been anticipated all year long—a week at summer camp. However, not just any camp would welcome its campers with dancing, costumed staff members. This warm greeting is extended at *The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp* in Ashford, CT.**

The mission of *The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp* is to serve as a nonprofit-residential summer camp and year-round center for children coping with cancer and other life-threatening illnesses. Each summer more than 1,000 children between the ages of seven and fifteen, from across the country and abroad, attend free of charge. Through the rest of the year, *The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp* offers programs for campers, their families and caregivers. In addition, the Camp provides support to other camps with a similar mission throughout the world.

I have had the opportunity to spend two magical summers at *Hole in the Wall*. In that time I have met hundreds of truly inspirational children. Throughout the year so many of these children are limited in their daily lives by hospital visits, medical treatments, and pain. They come to camp for seven days of their summer and suddenly realize the potential for a sense of freedom otherwise foreign to them in their everyday lives. There are no hospitals in sight. The infirmary, affectionately called the OK Corral, is hardly recognizable as such until you step into a treatment room. The walls are colorfully decorated with paintings and photos of children having the time of their lives. Doctors and nurses dress just like the rest of the counselors at camp,

without the white coats. Medication administrations are scheduled so that they interfere as minimally as possible with daily activities. The focus of all things camp is to create an environment in which these children can do what kids do best—play.

Playing involves participating in various activities throughout the Western-themed camp, including arts and crafts, woodshop, archery, swimming in a heated outdoor pool, boating and fishing, and so many others. Evening activities are planned for each night such as a carnival, stage night, dance party and banquet. It is at the opening night campfire that campers get a true sense of what the week will entail.

The skits at the campfire introduce campers to the camp theme of safety, respect, and love. While each of the 9 seven-day long sessions throughout



the summer have their own unique themes such as *The Wizard of Oz*, *Lights, Camera, Action!*, and *Superheroes*, the ideas of safety, respect, and love are staples of camp throughout the year. New campers quickly learn that *Hole in the Wall* is a unique and special place where you can feel comfortable being who you are. No one stares or laughs or points at you because you are different. People care about who you are, what you have to say, the things you like to do, the things that scare you, your favorite kind of music, etc. Bonds form amongst campers, sometimes due to similar medical experiences, but others for simple shared interests like making art projects or writing stories.

I have seen the extent to which campers feel safe in sharing experiences if they want to through cabin chats. A great nightly routine just before sleep, cabin chat begins when campers are on their beds and a single candle has been lit in the middle of the room. Each night a question is posed to the group by a counselor or camper, from anything as silly as

## Lessons in Life & Love

"If you could fill a swimming pool with anything in the world what would it be and why" to a more introspective "What has the best part of the week been for you?" Campers know the rules of cabin chat: no one has to answer if they don't want to, no comments are made about anyone's response, and what's said in cabin chat stays in cabin chat. This nightly ritual has created some of my best memories of the past two summers. To listen to these children share their fears, their dreams, and their thoughts on life is an incredible experience and has taught me so much about hope, compassion, and love in the midst of illness. The children who come to Hole in the Wall are wise beyond their years because they have been forced to grow up faster than the average child. The optimism and inspirational outlook on life that I have seen in so many of these children is remarkable given what they have been through.

My role on camp this past summer was within the Adventure program. Myself and my three team members led units of children through camp's low ropes course, where they engaged in teambuilding and communication activities while learning to stretch their limits and step outside their "comfort zone." These mornings frequently gave birth to some pretty amazing breakthroughs in cohesion and unity



amongst a group that previously had difficulties getting along. The low ropes activities together with what we call at camp "The Tower Experience" (the opportunity for the oldest unit each session to get to the top of our 37 foot climbing tower) introduces campers to the three T's: team, trust, and try. They learn what it is to try something new while having the trust and support of their cabin mates. Magical moments of campers urging one another on in the face of a camper's doubt and reservation about his/her physical or emotional limits are frequent and truly inspirational in Adventure. Campers are given the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about their experience in Adventure in the "de-brief" following each activity, and words exchanged here are profound. The children often compliment each other's efforts, talk about a newfound respect and

trust in their cabin mates, and explain what it was like to face and overcome their personal struggles and challenges.

In the two summers-worth of experience I have with *Hole in the Wall* I have had moments with children that words would not do justice. I have been there for tears and laughter, struggles and achievement, breakdowns and breakthroughs. I have been a shoulder for support and a hand for high fives. I have watched campers grow in the short span of a week and have learned from the strength and incredible love they have to offer. I have worked with a staff of the most incredible people, and it comes down to this: Camp is a family. Whether I am in the middle of a session halfway through the summer, or back at school in the middle of winter I know that I have a home at *Hole in the Wall*—a home built on shared experiences, common beliefs and visions, and emotional, physical, and mental growth. A family built on safety, respect, and LOVE.

*Stephanie Skuby is a member of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross, Medford, NJ. She spent two summers working at The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp in Ashford, CT as a cabin counselor and member of the Adventure program.*

*She is a 2006 graduate of Syracuse University and is currently a student at UMDNJ's Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in Piscataway, NJ.*



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## Memorial Services on New York City's Island of the Dead

by John Congdon

At secular memorial services, we are often told that the dead “lives on in our memory” or “isn’t really dead if we remember him.” At the end of the Orthodox memorial service (panikhida), the moving hymn “Memory Eternal” asks that our departed brother or sister be held in God’s eternal memory, which – unlike human memory – does not diminish or fade.

This became especially vivid for me last January, when I was blessed to coordinate a memorial at New York’s City Cemetery on Hart Island – better known as Potter’s Field.

Hart Island lies just east of City Island in the Bronx. It has been a country estate, a Civil War POW camp, a prison, and a drug rehabilitation facility. Since 1869, it has been where New York City has buried all its dead who are not claimed from the City Morgue. Today, there are over three quarters of a million men, women, and children buried together in mass graves, with over a thousand burials added every year. The island is run by the New York City Department of Correction, and the burials are performed by inmates from Riker’s Island.

When Christ commanded us to care for “the least of these,” I suspect he may have had these dead in mind. Many of those buried here are homeless, the poorest and most invisible of our

city. Many are John or Jane Doe murder victims: bodies recovered from crime scenes but never identified. Thousands of stillborn babies are here, whose parents are too poor or too distraught to make funeral arrangements.

However, death is the great leveler of the world, and even the famous have found their way to Potter’s Field. Disney child actor Bobby Driscoll, who found fame as Jim Hawkins in “Treasure Island” and as the voice of the title character in “Peter Pan,” died penniless in a Manhattan tenement and is buried on Hart Island.

The idea of praying at Potter’s Field had haunted me since I first read about it in a “*New Yorker*” article many years ago. Last year, though, I found out about an organization called the “*Interfaith Friends of Potter’s Field*” that seeks to arrange prayer services on Hart Island. One of these Friends was Bishop Dimitrios of Xanthos (GOA), whom I knew from my work at St Vladimir’s Seminary. Together, we helped to arrange the first panikhida ever held at Potter’s Field.

Early in the morning of January 8, 2007, I met Bishop Savas of Troas (Chancellor of the GOA), two students from St Vladimir’s Seminary, another member of the *Interfaith Friends*, and representatives and personnel from the Department of Correction. Together, we took the DOC ferry from City Island over the glassy water to Hart Island and then walked to a small prayer garden built by the prisoners themselves. As we walked, Bishop Savas asked the warden, “Where’s the cemetery?” He answered, “Pretty much everything you see.”

I’ve attended and sung for dozens of memorial services, but this one was different. Instead of the familiar settings of church or funeral home, we stood facing a windswept field of dead grass and scrub brush, an ordinary field – until you remembered that thousands were buried there.

At the end, Bishop Savas spoke of how Bishop Dimitrios had asked him to take his place, and how surprised he had been to learn of the existence of Potter’s Field. Drawing attention to the text of the service, where “thy servants known and unknown” replaced the name of the departed, His Grace vowed that henceforth he would remember all those buried here every time he serves the Divine Liturgy.



*Bishop Savas, SVS Seminarians, DOC personnel, and the author on the DOC ferry dock, January 8, 2007.*

His Grace asked me to say a few words as well, since I had worked for so many months arranging the service, working through DOC red tape, and coordinating with the *Interfaith Friends*. It was a difficult moment, and I'm afraid I don't recall much of what I said. One thing I do remember saying, though, was how humbling it was for us to be in the presence of such a great army of the least of Christ's brethren. I turned to the field, asked their forgiveness for our indifference, and thanked them.

Since that day, I have carried a small rock from Potter's Field in the pocket of my cassock.

It's a reminder of that day, but more than that, it's a reminder of my own mortality, of how close we all are to being lost and forgotten by our fellow man. Most of all, it reminds me of the tens of thousands of the poorest, weakest, and most marginal members of our society, who – even we condemn them to a desolate island cemetery on the outskirts of our city – will be among the first raised up to Christ on that last day.

*Subdeacon John Congdon is a member of Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church in Wayne, NJ and works in the Office of Institutional Advancement at St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary.*

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## The Stories of the Alaskan Saints come to DC

by Alexandra Safchuk

Our first North American saints, the saints of Alaska, model Orthodox mission, evangelism, and endurance. These saints are particular examples of missionaries who sanctified, yet did not just discard, the culture in which they did their missionary work. Scholar and storyteller Fr. Michael Oleksa came to the Washington Deanery in June 2006 to tell the stories of the Alaskan saints.

Fr. Michael and his wife, Xenia, came as part of a project to produce a series of professional broadcast quality documentaries about all the North American Saints (NASS). The series will begin with the evangelization of Alaska and include the lives of the saints starting with St. Herman.

Fr. Michael spoke at ten DC area parishes about St. Herman, St. Innocent, St. Juvenaly and St. Jacob. Even those who were very familiar with the saints were enthralled by the stories told in the manner of the ancient oral tradition.

During the visit Fr. Michael Oleksa and Matushka Xenia were hosted by the North American Indian Museum and the National Museum of Natural History. They were given the rare opportunity to peruse "the national attics." It was a delight to watch their reactions as each drawer or shelf revealed a hidden treasure. Several of the artifacts were items that Fr. Michael feared had disappeared from North America altogether.

Fr. Michael was also invited to present a public lecture at the Baird Auditorium of the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History, about the history and early exploration of Alaska. He told the story of the Russian migration to Alaska and outlined how the actual history differs from the one recorded in popular history books. He chronicled the scholarship that led to the clarification of the facts and answered questions on various subjects.

Since Fr. Oleksa's visit the 15 hours of lectures and maps footage have been indexed and transcribed and archival copies will be deposited at the OCA Archives at the Chancery in Syosset, New York.

The North American Saints Series is being produced by Katherine Vitko and Alexandra Safchuk under the auspices of the Department of History and Archives of the Orthodox Church in America. Jim Karabin, a member of St. Luke Orthodox Church in McLean, VA is the professional videographer of the project. Additionally, other volunteers and supporters have become excited about the project. Work will continue as funds become available.

The project is being funded by grants and private donations. A grant from the Alaska Humanities Forum provided the support for Fr. Michael's trip to the Washington Deanery.



*Please contact us if you have any questions or comments.*

*nasaintsseries@oca.org  
and nastseries@oca.org.*

## What's Happening (Musically) Around the Diocese

by Doreen Bartholomew and Carol Wetmore

About a year ago we were given a blessing by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman to begin organizing music workshop and other projects for the diocese. This article is meant to update you on what has happened and what we're planning for the future.



### Music Workshops

In 2006 we held two workshops. The first was on April 8th in New York City with The V. Rev. Sergei Glagolev speaking about *Singing Orthodox Music in the English Language*. The workshop included why we sing in the "language of the people," how to phrase the music for understanding and how to tell "good music" from "not so good" music.

The second workshop was in Bethesda, MD with Prof. David Drillock speaking about The Choir and the Congregation. His topic included subjects such as how the choir and the congregation work together in Orthodox worship and how the liturgical functions of hymns dictate how they are sung and by whom.

Mark Bailey kicked off our 2007 season with *Special Techniques for Singing Orthodox Music* held in Wappingers Falls, NY. Throughout the workshop, Mark taught and explained various unique and essential techniques to understanding and singing Orthodox liturgical music, and demonstrated those techniques by having participants sing through liturgical music designed for worship in today's Church.

Our second workshop for 2007 was something a little bit different. *Inspiring Children to Sing* was hosted by St. John the Baptist Church in Passaic, NJ. Our speaker was Dr. Mary Ellen Junda, nationally recognized teacher of children's voices and a specialist in the Kodaly Concept of Music Educa-

tion. Participants in this workshop learned about the child's singing voice and how it develops from pre-school through the early teens. Songs and age-appropriate activities were presented that inspire children to sing and help to develop their vocal and aural skills. The goal was for participants to feel comfortable making music with children and to help children have confidence in their singing voices.

On August 25, 2007 we were privileged to hold our third workshop of the year in Binghamton, NY. The speaker was Prof. Aleksei V. Shipovalnikov, whose topic was *The Art of the Liturgy*. Prof. Shipovalnikov addressed the five critical elements for executing effective liturgical services.

And the final workshop for 2007 will be on November 10th. This workshop will be sponsored by the OCA's Diocesan Music Committee and hosted by the Greek Orthodox parish of Ss. Constantine and Helen in West Nyack, NY. Mark Bailey, by special request from the host parish, will be repeating the workshop he did in Wappingers Falls.





### The Glagolev DVD Project

During the workshop on April 8th, a DVD was made by Peter Bucknell, who owns and operates [www.NYVideo.US](http://www.NYVideo.US).

Our idea was to have a series of DVDs produced that would be made available to the public. Although there seems to be a demand for videotapes/DVDs of these valuable sessions, they are costly to produce and even more costly to have edited for sale. The DVD recording for the Glagolev workshop was made possible only because of a generous donation from a member of the Serbian Orthodox Church and many, many hours of time by a volunteer to edit the original and then make copies. Because of the enormous cost involved for this type of project, it is very unlikely that future workshops will be video-recorded unless the host parish has the technical expertise to support both the taping and the editing, and a volunteer to do it. The Glagolev DVD can still be ordered and will be produced "on demand".

### What's in the Works?

We are in the process (admittedly it's turning out to be a very slow process) of producing a set of CDs to help choirs learn the eight obikhod tones for the troparia, prokeimena and stichera melodies. Our idea is to create the CDs with each part sung separately and then as a choir. A book of music will be included so learners can follow along with the CD clips. It has come to our attention recently that the OCA's Department of Liturgical Music is developing something very similar and we have offered to work with Prof. Drilllock and his Department. However, we have come across several issues, mostly having to do with how to overcome our different creative and stylistic preferences, the biggest stumbling block be-

ing the choice of translation. We are hopeful that we can collaborate with and support the OCA Departmental project and avoid duplication of effort. Once this is done.

### Hierarchical Liturgy Guidelines

We propose to develop and issue in the next 4-6 months a small brochure highlighting choir cues and functions particular to the Hierarchical Liturgy. Prof. Shipovalnikov reports numerous requests for this guidance from within the Diocese, and the Committee plans to try to meet this need.

### The Future of Music in our Diocese

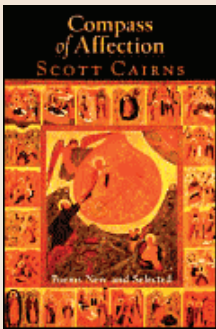
We all know how important it is to give our church musicians the proper training and encouragement. One way to do this is to make sure they know about the events in our diocese. And that's where you can help. Please make sure your parish listing on the OCA website is up to date and includes your choir director's name and email address. Also, please be sure to forward the email notices you receive and post the flyers you are sent. Encourage your choir director and choir members to attend the workshops whenever possible. If you see a specific need in your area, volunteer your parish to host a workshop to address that need. If we all work together, we can make a big difference in the musical life of our diocese. Thank you.

*If you wish to be put on a mailing list to receive information about future workshops and other music offers in our diocese, please send E-mail to:*

*[johndoreen@optonline.net](mailto:johndoreen@optonline.net)*

*with the subject Diocesan Music Information. Include your name, address, email and phone. Also tell us what parish you are from.*





## Compass of Affection

by Scott Cairns

A Review by Diana Pasca

**Scott Cairns is the author of five previous collections of poetry. He is an Orthodox Christian and currently Professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at the University of Missouri. At a significant point in his life, while living in Wichita, Kansas, his "salvation came in the shape of Eighth Day Books, a bookstore owned and operated by Warren Farha, an Antiochian Orthodox believer and, as it happens, an unfailingly generous man who is ever on the side of the stranger. He and his staff (most of them also Orthodox Christians) took me in and gave me a welcoming place to sit with books and coffee during the long afternoons away from my family. It was here that my ignorance about the continuity of Orthodox Christian worship was first abated."**

In an illuminating collection of new and selected poems, *Compass of Affection*, Scott Cairns takes readers on a journey rich with moral passion and great beauty. After finishing it, I felt the recognition that this is a writer whose vision is capable of making substantial claims on our conscience in matters of responsibility to ourselves and our community, provoking us to cleanse the intellect, and rid ourselves of sluggish ideas and pessimism. Just as easily his sense of humor permeates some of his most poignant moments.

I offer some selected reviews and what they meant to me. I say this because I've learned that each of us reading poetry might find the poem says something else to them, depending on our life, beliefs, memories, hopes and dreams.

"A Lot" - here the writer notices a simple vacant lot on his way home, evoking the intensity of the drive and its' effect on his senses, making language come alive and bringing us into the poem. He considers the possibilities, giving voice to an unanswerable question which a poem sometimes asks our minds to entertain.

And **this** poorly measured semi-rectangle, projected and plotted with the familiar little flags

upon a spread of neglected **terra firma**, also offers brief apprehension, which-let's face it, whether pleasing or encumbered by anxiety-dwells luxuriously in potential.

"From the Father"- here Cairns questions a momentary religious experience in his garden. Was it a vision? Is he asking us if we're hearing what he does? And doubting? What of the physical aspects? It was physical; his heart, his throat, and I think he was hopeful-a faith maybe that something would be revealed. He awakens us to the liveness of words as nothing else does, and creates a small space in the garden that attracts and concentrates our imagination:

*I mean, **was** the garden trembling or had it suddenly, unnaturally stopped? Was the disturbing motion something I was seeing or something I was seeing with? And why am I asking you?*

"Formal Brief: The Name" here the writer weaves the language of forgiveness and repentance into the tapestry of preparation for prayer. Intensely personal, this poem was very moving especially the quietness of the music, and the stillness he is seeking, the way I feel being alone in the woods by the water:

*And now that you are thus inclined, extend the courtesy to those who likewise don't deserve it. Address the water in the pool and leaning in forgive yourself. The Name won't bear repeating-I dare say-without such kind provision. Even so, The Name will bear thereafter subtle fruit suffused*

*beyond our reckoning, which also serves as sweet inducement to repeat The Name. Some among the saints have found in time their prayers avails most palpably in silence, and some have found a path from mind to heart. Regarding such, I may have more to say in future, but let's not hold our breaths.*

"Narration"- in perhaps the most powerful poem in the collection, Cairns is calling us to look at our world situation now, our suffering, and the ascent of the poet trudging upward out of hell's blackness. With language as political as he dares, he questions how we have appeared to opt for this, and to be so taken with it that we ignore God,

# Compass of Affection

keeping ourselves separate from him and each other. In the beginning, the press is likened to a wraithlike observer, a second self, frustrated at all that is unfolding. (full text of poem):

*If, on account of the political situation, the press  
has become an increasingly incredible  
source  
of quite palpable frustration, if certain  
of our neighbors have been made objects  
of suspicion, or have become, themselves,  
both irritable and suspicious, if our leaders  
address their glib monologues with relative  
success  
to the conspicuously inattentive, if the  
language  
of the tribe has been reduced to far fewer  
syllables,  
and the eyes of the tribe tend to glaze over  
at the first sign  
of a subordinate clause, that is our due. We  
have long  
desired that our confusions abate,  
regardless.  
If certain travelers are now subject to  
untoward  
scrutiny, if their baggage, clothing, and  
orifices are all  
equally fair game, if the poor of other lands  
fail to figure  
in the calculus of the launch, and if our  
own poor  
alternate between suicidal rage and  
suicidal obesity,  
if the water carries a taste of tin, and our  
daily bread  
contagion, these too are just deserts. And  
yes,  
the pattern established by our lately  
narrower range  
of variables has attained the look and feel  
of permanence.  
We have voted, and have agreed not to  
suffer  
the impractical illusions of an earlier time.  
Who can blame us?  
Who would dare? If we prefer the spoiled  
child's temper  
to actual courage, prefer the pride of the  
cock to anything  
smacking of humility, if we prefer what we  
call justice  
to the demands of mercy, what is that to you?  
The kingdom has come. We appear quite  
taken with it.  
For the time being, God's will has  
acquiesced to our own, at least  
in this, the kingdom of anxiety, the only  
realm we care to know.*

*\*In an article entitled "The End of Suffering" published this Winter in Image Magazine, Scott Cairns, who delivered the keynote address at Image Magazine's Glen Workshop in Sante Fe, New Mexico, the summer of 2006, explores possible solutions, and shares with us some insights gleaned from a series of pilgrimages he took to Mount Athos in Greece. In the article he talks about the tragedy of 9/11 in terms of an affliction that certainly got our attention, woke us up, "and how the ache of that waking, can, if lean into it, begin what the Greeks call kenosis, and emptying, a hollowing, and hallowing, in which we experience an abysmal emptiness, which then avails an apprehension of the big picture, the abysmal fullness in which we live and move and have our being." He speaks at great length about how we are called to work out this business of faith together, in community; "genuine personhood stipulates the communion of one with another. Not something one does alone." Some of the material from the keynote address was published in Image's Spring 2007 issue, as "Short Trip to the Edge". In the meantime, enjoy the "Compass of Affection" – certainly something going on there.*

## OCF Real Break: Building Orthodox Unity at the College Level

By John Shimchick

Every March many Orthodox college students participate in the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) alternative spring vacation program, *Real Break*. Students from all Orthodox jurisdictions travel to locations like Greece, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Toronto, and San Francisco for a week to participate in work projects, worship, and fellowship. For many, this has proved to be a life-changing experience. I have been able to participate in two *Real Break* trips-New Orleans (2006) and Dominican Republic (2007), with support from my parish. It has allowed me to get to know and work with young adults from outside the OCA.

Registration for *Real Break* 2008 will begin in November. Check [ocf.net](http://ocf.net) for more information.

*John Shimchick is a 2007 graduate of Rider University. Pictures from his trip to the Dominican Republic can be seen on the website of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross: [holycrossmedford.org](http://holycrossmedford.org) – "OCF Real Break"*



*John Shimchick with a local resident of Cercadillo, outside of Santa Domingo*

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# In The Valley Of Elah

A Review by Jack Wheeler

It's fall now and this means that studios are inclined to release more serious fare rather than the summer blockbusters. *In the Valley of Elah* tells the story of a man whose son has returned from Iraq, but is nowhere to be found. Although a well-written film, at times it tries a little too hard to impress you with its message. Written and directed by Paul Haggis who is also responsible for 2005's Oscar-winning *Crash*. That film, like this one, had great writing, great story elements, and great performances, but tried a little too hard to make a statement.

We start with the film's protagonist Hank Deerfield (played by Tommy Lee Jones) as he gets a call informing him that his son has gone AWOL. Through the first few scenes imagery is used rather than dialogue. This is screenwriting at its best. Haggis was a screenwriter for many years and knows what he's doing. In search of his son Hank heads to the military base and on his way sees an American flag flying upside-down. This kind of imagery is used effectively throughout. The flag turns out to be an innocent mistake made by a janitor from El Salvador. Hank helps him right the flag, and explains to the man the symbolic implications of an upside-down American flag. Through this scene we learn that Hank is patriotic and sticks to his convictions, and is willing to right wrongs. Throughout the film all of these qualities will be tested.

This brings us to the moral conflict. Events lead Hank to discover that his son is dead, murdered upon his return from Iraq. The local police chief refers the investigation to the military police to avoid election year difficulties. Although a body is discovered off the military base the police chief does not want the entanglements of the case. The indifference of the police department is a driving force in the film and serves as an example of what happens when some decide to take the easy route, rather than doing what is right. Emily Sanders, a detective who recognizes the need to investigate the case (played by Charlize Theron), serves as a voice of reason. She takes up Hank's cause and decides to look into the case.

Being a parent herself, Emily sympathizes with the loss of a child, and develops an emotional investment in the case. Shortly after meeting Hank, Emily invites him to her home for dinner. This scene affirms the theme of faith in the film. Before the meal Hank insists upon praying. This firmly establishes his religious faith, his trust

in the justice system, and the military. Later on we discover where the film gets its title. Hank tells Emily's son the story of David and Goliath, and how the story is ultimately about overcoming one's fear to do the right thing. The Valley of Elah is where David and Goliath met, and Hank finds himself in a symbolically similar situation.

Hank finds himself up against something greater than himself, but he believes in what is right. He faces his fear of the system in order to find the truth. The film instructs us that it's sometimes difficult to do the right thing, but ultimately the results are more rewarding than doing what is easy. The writing is very good, but the message becomes redundant. Almost without exception each scene conveys the same message whether in the background or the foreground.

The performances are stellar, how can you go wrong with three Academy Award winners? Tommy Lee Jones conveys sadness and anger simply through facial expressions. Susan Sarandon stands out as Hank's wife. She has some great scenes where it's hard to imagine she's acting. Charlize Theron is also impressive in her performance, as someone truly frustrated with the system she works for. The Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts, and Sciences will take a close look at this film come Oscar time.

This film may be overshadowed by more commercial films but is worth searching for a theater screening it. In the Valley of Elah exemplifies great filmmaking. Every scene, every moment, and every plot element matter. Pay close attention to it all. In every scene where there's a radio or television, there is news footage playing of either President Bush or the war. The film's only crutch is that it tries too hard to send a political message. Obviously any film with the Iraq War as a backdrop will have political overtones, but it doesn't have to be so heavy-handed. We already get it; the story is enough to tell us that this film is supposed to be a sign of the times.

Despite that, I highly recommend this film. It had me absorbed from the start, until the unexpected turn of events at the end. If you want to get a head start on checking out this year's Best Picture nominees before they're announced then this is the first one to see.

*Jack Wheeler is a graduate of SUNY-Purchase, majoring in screen writing.*

## Icons in Paramus

Recently Christ the Saviour Church in Paramus completed a remarkable iconographic project upon the walls of its fellowship area, known as the "Trapeza." The word is commonly used to describe the place where people eat and in a monastery or seminary it refers to the "refectory."

The iconographic series begins with the Old Testament story known as "the Hospitality of Abraham," his generosity to three visitors as described in Genesis 18. This account has been viewed in Orthodox tradition as an early revelation of the Holy Trinity.

The remaining eleven icons further develop an understanding of Salvation History, ending with the icon of the New Jerusalem and the Kingdom of God. As offered within this context, these icons surround the faithful, providing them a means of contemplation both while they are sharing a common meal or as their children are learning their Church School Lessons. Having these icons has transformed this important parish space into a concrete extension of the Liturgy.

*The iconographer of the Trapeza icons is Igor Stoyanov from Odessa, Ukraine.*



## 2007 OCA Parish Ministries Conference:

### THE HEART ASSURED – WORKS OF LOVE IN DEED AND TRUTH

by Diana Pasca

His Eminence, Archbishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada opened the conference with his Keynote Address at the opening session on Wednesday speaking of Outreach in a Healthy Parish.

Over and over he emphasized the need for us to be available and useful to the Lord, as he came not to be served but to serve. This is the fundamental expression of Christian love. Not held high by fancy talk, by eloquent preaching or clever teaching, unless it is demonstrated in concrete acts of love in our everyday life, minute by minute. We can't just talk about loving God, we have to do something about it, and not be passive recipients of God's grace.

Other Keynote speakers expanded on these ideas each day followed by lengthy discussions, and breakout groups. Most afternoons were spent in various workshops, with practical hands on, how to information being thoroughly discussed and shared by people who are really doing this work in their parishes, including: institutional barriers to parish ministries, supporting the hungry and the homeless, Mission work: project Mexico, Real Break, OCMC mission teams, IOCC work in the U.S. World Church Service projects including Crop Walk, Love in the Name of Christ-including those left out-inside the parish and outside, young family ministries, caregivers and the homebound, singles ministries, clergy/laity expectation of one another, and embracing all God's children-including those with special needs in the Church community.

This was not a vacation but work, starting each day with Matins at 7:30 am, breakfast and then at this all day till vespers and dinner, and then back to work in the evening till 9-9:30 pm.

We were nourished and filled by the Love of God, and joy of hearing and meeting so many people from all of this country and Canada who are at work bringing love, acceptance, and kindness to their church communities and the world around them.

I will leave you with a closing message that one of the layman presenting a session on our expectations shared with us: "The primary work of our Church is the salvation of souls, the redemption of the human race, and the transformation of cultures."

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*The Conference was held July 25-28, 2007 at Marymount University, Arlington, VA*



*Linda Wagar, Diana Pasca, and Liana Crookall*

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## Editor's Note:

We've asked Jurretta Heckscher, who works at the Library of Congress, not just to review books, but to help us understand, in the words of a National Public Radio feature, what books one "must read" and why. She, in turn, has asked these questions to Warren Farha who owns what some dedicated customers consider the "best bookstore in the world."

## Eighth Day Books: New. Used. Timely. Timeless.

by Jurretta Jordan Heckscher

It's probably a place you'd like to visit. It's a bookstore in Wichita, Kansas, in the heart of the American heartland, that calls itself "eclectic but orthodox" -- and is very much Orthodox. A place where Orthodox Christianity fearlessly engages the modern world, baptizing our own sprawling culture in accordance with Christ's command (Matt. 28: 19-20). A place where Darwin rubs shoulders with Dostoevsky, where Flannery O'Connor meets Ephrem the Syrian, and where contemporary American writers such as Marilynne Robinson and Wendell Berry teach about the life of faith in the same room as St. John Climacus and Archimandrite Aimilianos of the Holy Mountain. It's a place shaped by the conviction "that all truths are related and every truth, if we pay attention rightly, directs our gaze toward God" -- but it's also, as the poet Scott Cairns discovered, simply "a welcoming place to sit with books and coffee during the long afternoons" of a prairie winter.

It's called **Eighth Day Books** (<http://www.eighthdaybooks.com>), having both a physical and an online incarnation, and its very existence is an act of evangelism. Proprietor Warren Farha is an Orthodox Christian who founded **Eighth Day Books** some nineteen years ago out of a "fundamental impulse to bring Orthodoxy to the table of cultural discussion and analysis." "If we really believe Orthodoxy is the universal faith, the faith that established the universe," Farha explains, "we cannot be provincial. Who are the Orthodox in modern fiction, for instance? There are a few, but since Dostoevsky, who have we had? Or the fact that there are Orthodox parishes that don't even speak the language of the surrounding community: that is inexcusable. We have a responsibility to make our faith known -- and if we don't, we deserve to be marginalized!"

It's perhaps not surprising that **Eighth Day Books** has made converts in the literal sense. Cairns, for instance, who describes Farha as "an unfailingly generous man who is ever on the side of the stranger," found what he calls "my salvation" in the bookstore where "my ignorance about the continuity of Orthodox Christian worship was first abated" and he began to open himself toward the Church. "Scott was a visiting poet at Wichita State," Farha remembers, "and a fellow in the MFA program was assigned to host him, and that fellow also worked here [at the bookstore] -- he brought Scott to the store, and conversations began -- I introduced him to the Syriac Fathers, and other things followed." Yet Farha emphatically

"doesn't want [Eighth Day] to be pigeonholed as a 'religious bookstore,' which would narrow the customer base; instead, we want to be understood as interdisciplinary in a deep way." If this is evangelism, it is of the gentlest and most respectful kind. Eclectic books are brought together, strangers are welcomed, conversations begin, and who knows what other things may follow?

Here's what a conversation with Warren Farha might hold. What books has he read recently that have truly excited him? What books would he urge you to read right now?

"Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead: A Novel*," Farha says at once, "because the way that she can occupy the mind and heart of a rural Protestant pastor so well is amazing -- and the protagonist's kindness and sympathy for creation and merciful spirit are an icon of what it means to be human." In almost the same breath, he recommends *The Sweet Everlasting*, by Judson Mitcham, "a novel of the mid-twentieth-century South, by a Georgia poet. The protagonist is a sharecropper's son, and the novel is a picture of a life shattered and of how he puts it back together, piece by piece." Another recent must-read is *The Mountain of Silence: A Search for Orthodox Spirituality*, by the Cypriot-American sociologist Kyriacos C. Markides. "It makes the deepest dimensions of Orthodox spiritual life accessible through dialogue," Farha explains. "Areas that are very difficult to describe are brought into range for any serious reader. This work is a good way for non-Orthodox to get at the essence of Orthodox spirituality."

He'd also strongly recommend *The Boys: Waiting for the Electrician's Daughter*, a memoir by John Terpstra, a Canadian poet. Terpstra's wife is the electrician's daughter, and "the boys" of the title are her three brothers, who were all stricken with muscular dystrophy. "It's spare, unsentimental, and beautiful," Farha says. "You see this heroic mother and father build and maintain a family amid the backbreaking, gut-wrenching labor of caring for their severely handicapped boys -- it's an incredible book. You get to know the three boys as real people, not seen through their handicaps -- each is an individual person. The mother is a very religious Evangelical; the father, less so. There is an implicit questioning of God that recurs throughout the book, but it's personal, not bitter. The writer himself is a Christian, though he doesn't wear it on his sleeve." And then there's *A Place of Healing for the Soul: Patmos*, by Peter France, a journalist with the BBC who moved to the island of Patmos with his wife. "It's a

## Eighth Day Books

very light but delightful read about their enculturation on Patmos -- and France eventually, hesitantly, becomes Orthodox, partly through Bishop Kallistos Ware [who is a monk of the monastery on Patmos]; he had been an agnostic. It is," Farha concludes, "a beautiful little memoir."

For a man so involved with books, who understands they may open to us the world's wholeness in Christ, what are the books that have meant the most to him personally? What book, or books, have changed Warren Farha's life?

It's an intimate question, and he has to pause a moment to reflect on it. "There have been several such books, at several points," he says slowly. "One of them, which I read when I was seventeen, was [C.S. Lewis's] *Mere Christianity* -- that book and the whole encounter with Lewis has been life-shaping." So was Father Alexander Schmemmann's *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy*: "it led me into a whole new dimension of the liturgy that I'd never seen before. Also," he adds at once, "a little later, there was Dom Gregory Dix's *The Shape of the Liturgy* -- it confirmed historically what Schmemmann says theologically. And more recently, there have been several novels, like *The Brothers Karamazov* -- I agree with George Steiner that it's probably the greatest novel of all time. It shows the world in its entirety in one novel; and it's also the most luminous representation of Orthodoxy I've ever read, apart from perhaps the St. Serafim conversation with Motovilov. The Starets Zossima chapters," he explains, "could be a catechism of Orthodoxy."

Yet in his life as his bookstore, Farha affirms that revelation can come from works that are not explicitly theological. Wendell Berry's *Jayber Crow* "is another novel that deeply affected me," Farha says. "Berry is unlike any other modern novelist -- and it [the book] is Berry as a whole, the person, the man, what he represents, the beauty and simplicity of his language, and a novel that's about a very solitary person being drawn into community, extremely well done."

Perhaps there are books that have changed your life already. If you are looking for some that might still, you might want to wander -- online or in person -- into **Eighth Day Books**, a corner of the world that opens onto the Kingdom, the Eighth Day, where the human mind and heart and imagination can begin their transfiguration.

*Jurretta Heckscher is a cultural historian, writer, and a Research Specialist at the Library of Congress who attends St. Mark Orthodox Church in Bethesda, Maryland.*

## Icon Renovation Project in South River, NJ

In October, 2006 new icons were placed in the iconostas of SS Peter and Paul Church, South River, NJ as part of the parish's celebration of its 100th anniversary. These icons were completed and installed by iconographer, Dmitry Shkolnik (shown in the photo with the community's pastor, Fr David Garretson). Mr. Shkolnik had prepared other icons in the church and has done work for other parishes within our Diocese.

*A detailed presentation of these icons is available on the parish's website:*  
<http://www.saintpeterandpaul.org>  
-- "Church Photos" sidebar



## Holy Cross Church Blesses Biblical Garden

On Sunday September 9, 2007 the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross in Medford, NJ dedicated its new biblical garden in memory of John Phillips. Mr. Phillips, who fell asleep in the Lord earlier this year, had with his wife, Dorothy, been very active in caring for the landscaping on the church's new site. They were awarded a Gramota on behalf of the community, presented by His Grace, Tikhon, Bishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania who celebrated the church's consecration in 2004. They are well-known for their efforts in "loving the beauty"



of God's house in other parishes in which they have been members; most notably in SS Peter and Paul Church, Jersey City and Holy Resurrection Church, Wayne, NJ.

Jacob's  
well  
Autumn 2007



*Fr. John Shimchick and Dorothy Phillips*

## Treasurer's Report

presented by Larry Tosi

Since the last Assembly, we continue to operate within our budget and income. We have had an outside firm conduct an audit on our records and have no deficiencies. We have also have scheduled for October 5, 2007, our internal audit by auditors elected at the 2006 Assembly. Our budget and financial controls require two signatures on each check. Further, before any monies are spent, which are not monthly fixed costs; we require a pre-approval by the Metropolitan, Chancellor or Treasurer. No monies are reimbursed for expenditures unless a pre approval is given. After the event or expense, no monies are issued without appropriate receipts and certification that the funds were spent.

### Income:

There are currently four income categories of any consequence. The assessments, which include CCA, receipt constitutes the majority of monies received. This year we have instituted procedures to run receipts for youth and music programs through the diocesan account. We request that all diocese activities be run in such a manner. This is so we can monitor and control costs and receipts associated with a program. Lastly, we have reimbursement monies for the cost of the chancery received from Archbishop PETER.

Our cash income has been less than expenditures this year because several parishes have fallen behind in their assessment payment. Some of these parishes have withheld monies because they have lost trust in the central church administration. We still have been required to pay these monies to the CCA. And our fixed costs. Frankly, the withholding of the monies has caused the diocese to show a loss this year. My concern is that next year this will affect our ability to meet our goal to do more programs next year.

### Expenses:

All of our expense this year, with the exception of Youth and Music, has been within our budget parameters. The reason youth and music were over budget was the inclusion of receipts and expenses from programs. In the past we only accounted for payments which were not covered by receipts. In fact this year, the music programs were actually profitable. Also, you will note some

expenses to 2005 expense which were carried over for insurance and security systems.

Several categories had no expenses paid this year. We anticipate that this will not continue as the redirection of the diocese continues. As programs are further established the expenses will increase. We are currently establishing committees to review seminary student, youth, mission and college ministries. It is anticipated that these committees will establish their guidelines and program which will benefit the diocese. Further the diocesan paper should be coming out on a regular basis. We already anticipate some of these changes in next year's budget.

### 2008 Budget:

The budget is basically stable for next year. We have increased monies for theological education, youth, and college chaplaincies. The council has decided to place more monies available for students in the seminaries. A committee will determine the method of distribution. Further, we have elected to make a financial commitment to bring our youth and college students together in response to the statistics that we lose 60% of our teens and young adults during their high school and college days. We also have made allowances for the All-American Council for 2008.

### Conclusion:

We continue to keep the assessment stable. The next few years are great opportunities to begin some long term programs towards missions and young adults. The goal is to continue on this path for the next several years. Our mission and evangelization work, along with our young adult work are on the threshold of performing outstanding things. My goal is to try to support all efforts as best we can within the budget constraints and without raising assessment. I believe this is possible, especially if delinquent parishes become current.

## A Little Faith in the Darkness

*...continued from back page...*

*God puts people in our lives for a reason...*

*You never looked down on me or made me feel like  
I was just a worthless waste of flesh*

*I watched you do the work... To me, it was amaz-  
ing you shared that with me...*

*I learned just by doing a little bit each day it can  
all get done...*

*I learned the process of change, a little at a time...*

*For the first time in a very long time, I was trust-  
ed...*

*I liked that feeling and I didn't want to let anyone  
down...*

*Doing the right thing feels a heck of a lot better  
than not doing it.*

*I cried to God to help me and then I met you and I  
just knew He had already started...*

*The person I was out there was never really me*

*I even felt like a failure cause I couldn't kill myself  
the right way*

*I used to think even God didn't want my life*

*Well, now I know I was right about God not want-  
ing my life*

*But only because He wanted me to have it*

*Every night I pray. I thank Him every day...*

*I am grateful just to sleep in a bed and wake up  
with a roof over my head*

*My son learned to tie his shoes and couldn't wait  
to tell me*

*And you know what he was able to do? Double-  
knotting!*

*Thank you for teaching me to have a little faith in  
myself*

*This is one gift from God I won't be returning...*

PS: Tommy never made it out... Found him on the  
tracks, dead in his addiction.

*Fr. Siniari serves SS Peter and Paul Albanian  
Orthodox Church in Philadelphia and works for  
Covenant House, Atlantic City. Previous articles by  
him are available on our website: [jacwell.org](http://jacwell.org)*

## With Unceasing Voice

The choir of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross in Medford, NJ has just released its first CD - "With Unceasing Voice" - under the leadership of its director, Josef Gulka. The CD contains 28 selections, including many of Mr Gulka's own arrangements of Orthodox hymns as well as a composition by the parish's pastor, Fr. John Shimchick.

The CD has been professionally mastered and produced with a six page full color insert containing background information on the individual pieces. The cost is \$15.00, plus \$2.50 for shipping and handling.

Make checks payable to:

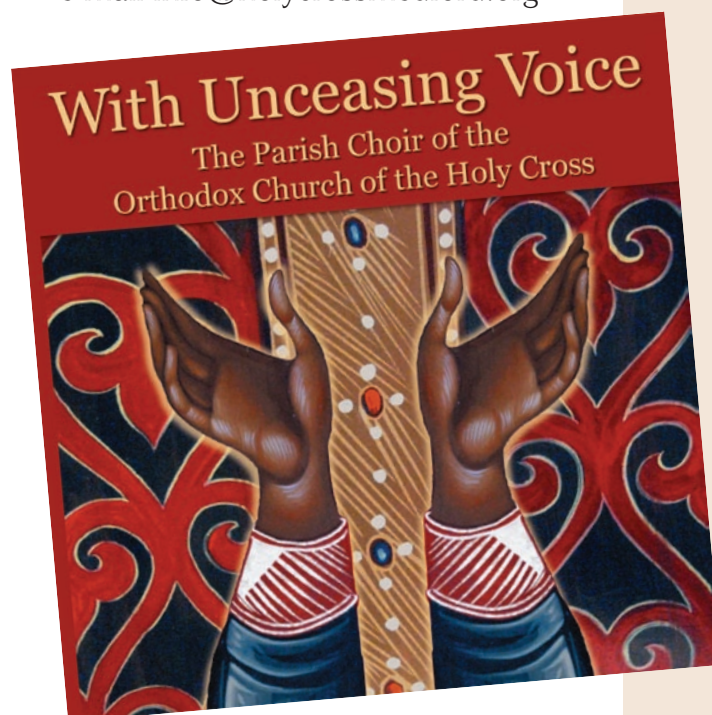
**"Holy Cross Choir"**

Mail to:

Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross  
ATTN: Holy Cross Choir  
PO Box 805  
Medford, NJ 08055

Questions:

e-mail [info@holycrossmedford.org](mailto:info@holycrossmedford.org)



Jacob's  
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## A Little Faith in the Darkness

by Fr. Stephen Siniari

### It's a dark place, under the El...

They call it the tunnel, the section that runs up above and shadows Kensington Avenue...

Elevated train-tracks two stories overhead that snake for almost 13 miles through Philadelphia from Bridge and Pratt up north, diving underground for a while through downtown Philly, coming up for air and heading out to 69th Street on the city's western edge... They call the boys and girls who work under there, tunnel-boys, or tunnel-girls...

Selling themselves for eight to ten bags a night, in and out of cars, eight to ten times a night... Ten dollars a pop.

She was one of the most infamous, Cici, bright blue eyes shining up, looking at me like, don't take this personally, taking the chocolate milk and bouncing it off my head, the corner of the carton leaving a dent... Nothing personal, dude... Just don't waste my time. I'm out here to make money, not to talk to religious-types... Only after the same thing every other guy in every other car coming down the avenue is after, same con, different suit... nothing personal... Sat down on the grime-encrusted slab and stared at each other while I rubbed my head and tried to get into hers.

*There is*

*A cold stone step*

*On this bleak avenue*

*Where no one*

*Wants to sit*

*A shadowed doorway*

*Along this street*

*Where no one*

*Wants to sleep*

*An abandoned shell*

*In this crumbling neighborhood*

*People no longer call a home*

*A darkened car*

*With someone inside*

*Who no one wants to touch*

*But I am sitting here, Lord*

*I am sleeping here*

*I am being touched*

*And I am dying of this darkness*

*Lord, please send someone*

*Who will remember my name*

*I am here, Lord and I am Yours.*

The next night I asked the cook for chocolate milk in those soft aluminum pouches, the kind you poke a straw through. But Cici claimed she didn't even remember the first incident. Besides, I knew she was just performing for her husband Tommy who had her out here to pay for both their habits.

These years later, she's graduated college and been reunited with her son.

So how did this happen, people half-politely ask.

I half-politely answer. Doing the basics.

When things get complicated, even in the Church, do the basics. You can figure that out, can't you, and apply it to your situation?

Well, this might help...

She wrote while recuperating after she got run over, twice in the same night, by a guy in a car when a deal went bad, first in drive, then the back-up lights went on as I was running toward her stretched-out in the street and Tommy sat and watched... She recovered...

But then tumbled off a three-story building, thinking about the second floor, "This is gonna' hurt..."

Here are 20 excerpts from Cici's letter that might help your situation...

*Continued on page 23...*

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# Jacob's well

Diocese of Washington and New York  
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