

The 2024 Annual Report



Saint Mary Orthodox Christian Church

Wichita, Kansas

A Parish of the Diocese of Wichita and
Mid America Antiochian Orthodox
Christian Archdiocese of North America

**Saint Mary Orthodox
Christian Church
Annual Parish Meeting**

November 3, 2024
(Immediately following Divine Liturgy)

Agenda

- Opening Prayer.....Fr. Aaron Warwick
- Call to Order.....Paula Zarich
- Pastoral Report.....Fr. Aaron Warwick
- Minutes of the 2023 Annual Meeting.....Paula Zarich
- Parish Council Report.....Paula Zarich
- Treasurer’s Report & 2025 Budget.....Darren Minks
- Mediterranean Festival Report.....Tracy Namee
- Model Church Task Force.....Fr Aaron Warwick
- Business from the Floor.....
- Closing Prayer.....Fr. Aaron Warwick



ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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PASTOR

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ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

November 3, 2024

Acepsimas the Bishop, Joseph the Presbyter, & Aeithalas the Deacon, Martyrs of Persia, George of Neapolis the New Martyr, Holy Father and New Hieromartyr Gregory of Neapolis, Theodore the Confessor, Bishop of Ancyra, Winifred of Treffynnon

Beloved in Christ,

This year on November 22, I will celebrate 15 years as your parish priest. It has been a joy and honor to serve this church. As I reflect back on the past 15 years and look forward to the future, I realize how different our parish is now as compared to more than a decade ago. Most specifically, over 70% of our current parishioners do not have a family history at St. Mary. They have either joined the Orthodox Church in adulthood (or been born to someone who joined the church in adulthood) or have relocated to St. Mary from another parish—sometimes even from another country! This demographic change is quite significant. Although I do not have any official numbers, I would guess that 15 years ago, close to 70% of our parishioners had a family history in our parish.

To me personally, this change in demographic is neither good nor bad—it simply is the reality. In addition to that, in the past 15 years, and for the 15 years before that, society and technology have changed significantly. While many Christians like to complain about some of these changes, I prefer to recognize that the changes simply exist. Some changes are good, some are bad (in my opinion). No human society, nor any point in time, is perfect.

I bring up our demographic and societal changes to make what I believe is an important point: to survive and thrive as a parish, we need to recognize that the environment in which we operate is different than in the past. Our parishioners do not know each other as well as they did in the past **unless we make concerted efforts to get to know one another**. This is why our coffee hours and other social events are an important aspect of our community life. They provide us with an opportunity to enjoy Christian fellowship; to rejoice when our fellow parishioners rejoice, and to weep with them when they weep (see Romans 12:15). I hope that each of you will consider introducing yourself every week at coffee hour to someone you have not previously met. This approach is a wonderful opportunity to meet others. If you are nervous about doing that, know that the other person is probably just as nervous as you, so take the plunge and be the one to extend a warm welcome to them.

As this current year closes, and as we look towards 2025, I want you to be aware that, in consultation with the Parish Council, I have put together a Model Church Task Force. The members of this task force will be identifying and interviewing clergy and lay leaders of parishes around the country that we

believe, in many ways, serve as a model Orthodox parish. We are looking for faithful and vibrant communities. During the interview process, we hope to learn about the ideas, strategies, and programs that the clergy and lay leaders of these model churches believe drives their success. Finally, the Task Force and Parish Council will work together to determine if there are any ideas and programs we could put in place at St. Mary that would benefit our parishioners as much as it has benefitted the members of the identified Model Churches. If you have ever visited another Orthodox church and believe we should consider that parish as a Model Church, please let me know ASAP.

We thank God for this past year and the many blessings He has bestowed on us. We ask for His continued guidance as we strive to manifest the presence of Christ on earth.

PARISH RECORDS

Since our last Annual Meeting, several of our longtime and well-loved parishioners fell asleep in the Lord. The following members of our parish passed from this life: **Albert Busada** (December 2023), **Richard Zarich** (March 2024), **Lawrence Miller** (July 2024), and **Marcus Kosjer** (September 2024). May their memory be eternal!

Our parish also was sad to say goodbye to **Nathan & Maren Kingery**, as well as their children, when they relocated to Salina. We pray that God will continue to bless them. We always enjoy their visits back home and welcome them with open arms.

While mourning for those we lost, we thank God we received several new members this past year. Since our last annual meeting in November 2023, we were blessed to receive four new parish members through Holy Baptism: **Ben Bazil** (son of Vanessa Bazil); **Cameron Walker**; **Lyla Harrison**; and **Nicolas Holmes** (son of Aaron & Hannah Holmes). We also received seven more members through Holy Chrismation: **David & Anita Thomas**; **Beth Elliott**; **Dawn Beers**; **Alexander Beers**; **Omar Mares**; and **Deana Westenfeld**. We welcome all of these new members and pray that God will grant them many years!

This past year, we were also happy to receive six new members as they transferred to our parish from other Orthodox churches. These new members are: **Bruce & Sheila Cairns** (returning to our parish from Iowa); **Darla Jean Gilbert** (transferred membership from St. Michael/Park City, KS); **Stacy Shipman & James Odong** (transferred membership from St. Michael/Louisville, KY); and **Rasha Salib** (transferred membership from St. Mark/Irvine, CA).

In addition to the joy of bringing in these new members, we celebrated one wedding this past year: **Andrew & Mary Abukalam** (September 2024). We pray that God will grant them a long and prosperous life together!

Yours in Christ,

Fr Aaron Warwick

St. Mary Orthodox Christian Church
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
November 5, 2023

Call to Order

The annual General Meeting of St. Mary Orthodox Christian Church in Wichita, Kansas was held on Sunday, November 5, 2023 in the church all-purpose room. Jason Ewertt, Parish Council Chairman, called the meeting to order at 11:55 a.m. Father Aaron Warwick opened the meeting with a prayer.

Quorum Present

46 voting members of the parish were in attendance, which represented a quorum for the holding of a meeting of the members.

The following 2023 Parish Council members were present:

Father Aaron Warwick

Jason Ewertt	Chairman	(second two-year term ends 12/23)
Joan Ferris	Vice Chair	(two-year appointment term ends 12/23)
Darren Minks	Treasurer	(two-year appointment term ends 12/24)
Helen Stitt	Secretary	(initial two-year term ends 12/24)
Shanna Binkley		(initial two-year term ends 12/23)
Ken Dannenberg		(initial two-year term ends 12/24)
Judith Shippy		(initial two-year term ends 12/24)
TC Wallace		(second two-year term ends 12/23)

The following council member was absent:

Rick Husselman (initial two-year term ends 12/23)

Pastoral Report

Father Aaron Warwick's pastoral report was given in the form of a homily at the Liturgy before the meeting.

- Father Aaron explained that the lesson from the day's gospel about the rich man and Lazarus was how Jesus brought the Jews and Gentiles together as one community under God. The Jews (rich man) had the laws, and Lazarus (meaning God's helper) shows how to accept God as our helper. St. Mary Parish has been bringing a community started by Lebanese / Syrians together with other communities over the years.
- St. Mary is viewed as an open and welcoming community that shows hospitality and kindness to strangers. Father Aaron thanked the parish and encouraged everyone to continue this practice.
- There were challenges for the parish, as there were times of difficulty in combining the different communities. It is important to respect and honor the parish's heritage and history. We need to deal with changes in the parish with respect for its history.
- Fundraising is a topic that can cause differing opinions. It is important to listen and respect everyone's opinions and learn other perspectives. Fundraising will be important this year in order to meet our budgetary needs. Fundraising can allow those who are unable to personally give a lot financially to participate and contribute by their volunteer work.
- Most importantly, we need to continue to show mutual respect for each other, even when there is frustration. Assume the best in others so that we can continue to successfully blend our two communities to do God's work.
- The rest of his report can be found in the 2023 annual report booklet.

Father Aaron announced the nominees for five Parish Council positions for 2024: Shanna Binkley, Dee Ann Bragg, Rex Casner, Joan Ferris, Tracy Namee, Laura Stanley, Sarah Wagner, Blaise Webster, and Paula Zarich.

Minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting

The chair asked for any changes to the minutes of the 2022 annual general meeting as presented in the 2023 annual report. No changes were proposed.

Dick Zarich moved and Mary Ann Khoury seconded that the minutes of the November 6, 2022 annual general meeting be approved as presented. Motion carried.

Parish Council Report

Parish Council Chairman Jason Ewertt thanked the 2023 Parish Council members for their service, and for letting him serve as the PC Chair. He also thanked the parish for the opportunity to serve on the council for four years. He encouraged everyone to consider serving on the council.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Darren Minks highlighted certain items in the financial statements that are part of the 2023 annual report, including the following:

2022 Operating Statement

Revenues:

- Tray & Pledge collections in 2022 set a record (\$281,510) and exceeded the budget by \$36,500.
- The Mediterranean Festival netted \$52,000 (before our charity donation), which exceeded the budget by \$14,000.
- Overall revenues exceeded our budgeted revenues by \$51,520.

Expenses:

- Overall expenses exceeded our budgeted expenses by \$27,636. Main contributors to this variance were: building insurance premiums, utilities, Archdiocese dues, and Father Aaron's compensation.

- The overall surplus of revenues over expenses was almost \$22,500. \$17,000 of the surplus was moved into the building reserve fund.
- We had approximately \$42,000 in capital improvements related to the roof, which was funded by the building reserve fund.

Review of 2023 Financials:

Total cash as of September 30, 2023 was \$206,124, which includes the general checking account, the savings account, the building reserve account, and the combination of various ministry team accounts.

Revenues:

- Tray & Pledge collections are projected to finish the year at a little over \$265,000, which is slightly below the budget of \$275,000.
- Festival revenue netted a little more than \$37,500, which exceeded the budget by \$12,500.
- Overall, revenues are expected to exceed the budget by \$6,700.

Expenses:

Expenses are expected to be below the budget approximately 1.3% (\$4,100). The largest variances are in the areas of Archdiocese dues, building insurance premiums and utilities. Overall, we are projecting a net surplus of about \$4,900 of revenues in excess of expenses. We had originally expected a deficit.

Capital Improvements:

We have no significant capital improvement project costs for the remainder of 2023.

Review of 2023 Proposed Budget:

The budget committee meeting was attended by committee members Father Aaron Warwick, Parish Council Chairman Jason Ewertt, Darren

Minks, Eric Namee, Laura Stanley, Taylor McMillin, and Sarah Wagner. Darren expressed special thanks to Eric Namee for his work in preparation for the meeting, and for hosting the meeting. The proposed budget was then presented to and approved by the Parish Council at the October meeting.

Highlights of the proposed budget include:

Revenues

- Tray & Pledge collections are budgeted at \$270,000, which is \$5,000 lower than last year's budget, and is reflective of the changes in our demographics that Father Aaron addressed in his annual report.
- Festival revenue is budgeted at \$35,000, which is an increase of \$10,000 from last year's budget.
- Total budgeted revenues for 2024 are \$309,284, and when compared to the 2023 budget of \$302,684, represents an increase in overall revenue of \$6,600.

Expenses:

- Total expenses are budgeted for \$317,117, which is up about \$8,500 from last year's budget due to inflation (2.8% increase).
- Wages for the Secretary and Janitor reflect a 4% increase due to inflation and average wage increases from market conditions.
- Father Aaron Warwick's compensation package which includes his salary along with benefits, increases by \$10,000. The prior year's budget was held flat, per Father Aaron's request.
- The budget reflects a small deficit as a result of expenses exceeding revenues in the amount of \$7,833. We believe that this is a conservative budget, with some opportunity for additional revenue growth and/or expense reductions. There is a need to look at the Dillons' fundraiser and promote it more.

Paula Zarich moved and Sarah Wagner seconded that the budget for 2024 be approved. Motion carried.

Mediterranean Festival Report: Tracy Namee

Tracy Namee recognized Mike Zarich for his tireless work on the festival over the past several years. Highlights of Tracy's report are:

- There will be seating in the parish hall for those who would like to dine in. Dine-ins will go through the order line before being seated.
- Drive-thru and carry out will be available.
- One plate will be offered (kibbe, green beans and rice, rolled cabbage, salad and baklava).
- Approximately ½ of the revenue comes from the marketplace. Only 22 families donated items for the marketplace in 2023. Better participation was encouraged.
- The DUI Victim Center of Kansas will be the charity recipient for 2024.
- The festival provides good fellowship and the opportunity to show our hospitality to Wichita.
- The festival is May 18. Please try to help on the days leading up to the festival.

Family Promise

Vicki Jones introduced Melanie and Beth from Family Promise. St. Mary was one of the first churches to partner with Family Promise. Beth reported that Family Promise has grown tenfold in the number of sign-ups in the shelter program. Rental assistance was added in 2020.

Melanie reported that clients were asked what their favorite part of the program was, and they said that it was the connection with the volunteers at the churches. Melanie encouraged volunteers to include

their children when they participate. St. Mary will host during the week of Christmas. Community partners will help provide presents. Beth and Melanie will work with Vicki Jones to make sure this is done.

DUI Victim's Center

Mary Ann Khoury gave a brief history of the beginning of the organization. She thanked Mike Zarich for making the videos over the years, Justine Nightingale for working on the website, and Jason Ewertt and Father Aaron Warwick for serving on the board during the rebuild of the organization. A video was shown. Mary Ann introduced Heather Plaza, Executive Director.

Heather expressed her appreciation to Jason Ewertt, Father Aaron Warwick, and everyone who has helped. She gave a heartfelt talk about conscious safety measures, and shared several victim's stories. She discussed different services and volunteer program opportunities. The Candlelight Vigil will be held at St. Mary. Grief groups have been meeting in the hall monthly. She invited the parish to get involved.

Business from the Floor

None

Dick Zarich moved and Paula Zarich seconded that the meeting be adjourned. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Jason Ewertt at 1:05 p.m.

Father Aaron Warwick gave a closing prayer and blessing.

ST MARY ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

BALANCE SHEET

SEPTEMBER 30, 2024

ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH
Balance Sheet
As of September 30, 2024

	Sep 30, 24
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
1000 · Intrust General Checking	2,367.89
1025 · Intrust General Savings	19,917.80
1050 · Missionary Fund Acct.	6,922.97
1105 · Memorial Fund Checking Acct.	14,872.17
1110 · Bookstore Checking Acct.	4,825.36
1120 · Prop Imprvmt Fund Acct.	305.92
1150 · Belles Checking Acct.	4,698.67
1165 · St. Mary Fundraiser Acct.	1,610.99
1171 · Teen SOYO Checking Acct	3,084.65
1175 · Sunday School Acct.	1,766.77
1180 · Humanitarian Checking Acct	1,990.19
1187 · Katras Building Reserve Acct.	54,299.68
1188 · CD - Katras 90 day	57,567.41
1190 · Petty Cash	83.34
1195 · Priest Discretionary Fund Acct.	2,244.67
1260 · C.D.-E. G. Stevens Charity	10,070.00
Total Checking/Savings	186,628.48
Other Current Assets	
1300 · Bookstore Inventory	19,225.43
Total Other Current Assets	19,225.43
Total Current Assets	205,853.91
Fixed Assets	
2010 · Real Estate & Building-344 S.	285,000.00
2011 · Real Estate - 325 S. Martinson	40,424.80
2012 · Real Estate - 337 S. Exposition	13,311.27
2020 · Building Improvements- Pre-1999	33,036.70
2030 · Building & Improvements - 1999	1,307,196.44
2031 · Building Improvement-Post-2000	36,245.89
2032 · Building Improvements-Post 2013	280,448.19
2040 · Parking Lot	315,002.19
2050 · Equipment and Personal Property	97,362.40
2053 · Furniture	25,961.58
2056 · Kitchen Equipment	52,089.32
2060 · Office Equipment	31,955.05
Total Fixed Assets	2,518,033.83
TOTAL ASSETS	2,723,887.74
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
2101 · Payroll Liabilities	912.02
Total Other Current Liabilities	912.02
Total Current Liabilities	912.02
Total Liabilities	912.02
Equity	
1110 · Retained Earnings	335,479.74
3100 · St. Mary Church Net Worth	2,433,604.53
3110 · Memorial Funds Retained	14,872.17
3130 · Family Promise Fund	1,872.26
3160 · Altar Improvement Fund	1,325.70
3170 · Meal Train Ministry Fund	515.81
Net Income	-64,694.49
Total Equity	2,722,975.72
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	2,723,887.74

ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH
2024 Projections and 2025 Proposed Budget
INCOME

	2024 THRU 9/30/24	2024 PROJECTED	2024 BUDGET	BUDGET VARIANCE	PROPOSED BUDGET
Operating Income					
Tray & Pledge Collections	145,827	259,436	270,000	(10,564)	268,000
General Donations	100	100	0	100	0
Directed Donations (Net)	275	275	0	275	0
Miscellaneous	86	86	0	86	0
Total Operating Income	146,288	259,897	270,000	(10,103)	268,000
Dillons Gift Certificate Income	519	692	900	(208)	700
Bookstore					
Bookstore Income	2,363	3,151	4,432	(1,281)	3,151
Bookstore Expenses	(1,928)	(2,571)	(3,048)	477	(2,142)
Net Bookstore Income	435	580	1,384	(804)	1,008
Mediterranean Festival					
Mediterranean Festival - Income	57,193				
Mediterranean Festival - Expenses	(13,736)				
Mediterranean Festival Income	43,457	43,457	35,000	8,457	35,000
Net Christmas Baklava Sales	0	2,500	0	2,500	2,500
Total Interest Income	1,982	2,643	2,000	643	1,600
Archdiocese Spec. Projects					
Archdiocese Special Projects-Coll.	390	390	1,200	(810)	1,200
Archdiocese Special Projects-Disb.	(370)	(390)	(1,200)	810	(1,200)
Net Arch. Spec. Projects	20	0	0	0	0
Other Special Projects					
Other Special Projects-Collections	3,120	3,120	0	3,120	0
Other Special Projects-Disbursements	(3,120)	(3,120)	0	(3,120)	0
Net Special Projects	0	0	0	0	0
Total Income	192,701	309,769	309,284	485	308,808

ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH
2024 Projections and 2025 Proposed Budget

	2024 THRU 9/30/24	2024 PROJECTED	2024 BUDGET	BUDGET VARIANCE	PROPOSED BUDGET
EXPENSES					
Total Priest Stipend, Insurance, Retirement	88,751	118,335	118,335	(0)	121,500
Other Salaries					
Secretary	14,902	19,869	19,656	213	15,300
Janitor	25,793	34,194	33,415	779	34,425
Total Other Salaries	40,695	54,063	53,071	992	49,725
Operating Expenses					
Accounting	4,404	5,872	4,500	1,372	5,000
Public Relations/Advertising	641	641	1,000	(359)	800
Bank Charges	0	0	200	(200)	200
Charitable Contributions	4,600	4,600	3,500	1,100	3,500
Commitments: Archdiocese Assessment	22,939	30,585	30,264	321	30,292
Commitments: Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America	350	350	350	0	350
Computer Software/Internet	2,450	3,014	2,800	214	2,800
Conferences/Meetings	3,169	3,169	3,000	169	3,000
Education & Retreats	1,825	2,225	1,500	725	1,500
Flowers	873	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
Funeral Ministry	13	13	0	13	0
Gifts (Net of Parishioner Donations)	315	315	450	(135)	450
Honorariums/Stipends	1,700	1,700	1,400	300	1,900
Insurance	19,260	19,260	20,094	(834)	21,186
Kitchen & Bathroom Supplies	2,838	3,784	4,364	(580)	3,973
Laundry & Dry Cleaning	0	0	100	(100)	100
Lawn & Garden	6,919	9,225	10,945	(1,720)	9,687
Liturgical Supplies	1,900	2,533	3,298	(765)	2,660
Maintenance & Repairs-Building & Properties	15,021	7,500	7,500	0	7,500
Maintenance & Repairs-Office Equip.	1,507	2,009	1,824	185	1,900
Maintenance & Repairs-Personal Property	2,584	3,445	900	2,545	1,500
Missions: Diocese of Mid-America Commitment	1,500	1,500	0	1,500	1,500
Office Supplies	702	936	1,000	(64)	1,000
Parish Dinners/Social Events	1,168	1,200	1,200	0	1,200

ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH
2024 Projections and 2025 Proposed Budget

	2024 THRU 9/30/24	2024 PROJECTED	2024 BUDGET	BUDGET VARIANCE	PROPOSED BUDGET
Payroll Taxes	3,113	4,151	4,060	91	3,804
Pest Control	843	1,014	948	66	1,034
Postage	574	765	950	(185)	850
Priest Discretionary Expenses	1,000	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
Printing	222	250	250	0	250
Security	144	144	0	0	0
Sunday School (Orthodox Education Program)	145	145	200	(55)	1,000
Utilities (Electric/Gas/Water)	18,780	25,040	29,294	(4,254)	26,292
Telephone	1,617	2,156	2,160	(4)	2,160
Trash	1,477	1,969	1,560	409	1,560
Youth Ministry & Pre-teens	310	310	1,000	(690)	1,000
Treehouse	1,000	1,000	1,000	0	1,000
Chirst the Savior Academy	750	750	750	0	750
Eighth Day Institute	500	500	500	0	500
DUI Victims Center	500	500	500	0	500
Marriage Dynamics/Family Promise	239	239	0	239	0
Miscellaneous	175	350	350	0	350
Total Operating Expenses	128,067	145,161	145,711	(694)	145,048
Total Expenses	257,513	317,559	317,117	298	316,273
NET OPERATING CASH INCREASE (DECREASE)	(64,812)	(7,790)	(7,833)	187	(7,464)

ST MARY ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH
HISTORICAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION

ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH
Historical Operating Statement (2018-2023)
INCOME

	2,018 ACTUAL	2,019 ACTUAL	2,020 ACTUAL	2,021 ACTUAL	2,022 ACTUAL	2,023 ACTUAL
Total Operating Income	254,352	254,720	251,882	288,898	284,246	267,442
Dillons Gift Certificate Income	1,336	1,104	1,127	954	789	744
Net Bookstore Income	489	472	210	460	889	1,719
Mediterranean Festival Income	35,891	39,221	7,198	43,042	52,010	37,627
Total Interest Income	50	291	223	71	479	3,041
Net Arch. Spec. Projects	0	0	0	0	0	0
Net 90th Anniversary Fundraisers	0	0	0	1,870	(2,109)	0
Net Brick Fundraiser	0	13,227	100	150	0	0
Total Income	292,118	309,035	260,740	335,445	336,304	310,573
EXPENSES						
Total Priest Stipend, Insurance and Retirement	100,695	105,715	108,634	114,635	116,635	118,585
Total Other Salaries	36,772	39,540	40,169	39,632	49,497	53,520
Total Operating Expenses	113,152	125,789	114,800	112,976	147,675	140,620
Total Expenses	250,619	271,044	263,603	267,243	313,807	312,725
NET OPERATING CASH INCREASE (DECREASE)	41,499	37,991	(2,863)	68,202	22,497	(2,152)

FAMILY PROMISE MINISTRY TEAM ANNUAL MEETING REPORT 2024

The Mission

Family Promise of Greater Wichita unites hearts and hands to provide compassionate hospitality and empower homeless families with children to achieve sustainable independence.

Matthew 25:35 "For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was in prison and you came to Me"

St. Mary Parish participates by hosting families in the program four times a year in our church building. Families arrive at St. Mary on Sunday in time for the evening meal. Parishioners volunteer their time by driving families to and from the day house, setting up the rooms, and sleeping overnight at the church. Evening meals, food for breakfast, and snacks are all provided by St. Mary parishioners. The families eat their evening meal and spend the night at the church. Lunches are made and snacks packed before heading to their rooms for the night. They are transported to the day house by 6:15 each morning. During the day they work, attend classes, shower, do laundry, and a multitude of other tasks before returning to the church in time for the evening meal. Both the families and parishioners are encouraged and blessed by the interactions throughout the week. Although approximately fifty parishioners have participated so far this year, there is still a need for more to participate in this significant ministry by providing hospitality and shelter. Our next week to host families is December 8-15. Contact Vicki Jones at 650-0658 or vawj55@gmail.com for more information.

Mediterranean Festival 2024 Annual Report

Our parish was once again blessed this past May with a very successful Mediterranean Festival. Our net income was \$43,457. Not only did this event help us meet our financial needs, it afforded us the opportunity to open our doors to the community, sharing our food, faith and hospitality. It also provided many opportunities for fellowship within our parish family as we worked together preparing for the event. Our festival allowed us to donate \$4500 to the DUI Victim Center of Kansas, as the charitable recipient of this year's festival.

No sooner was the 2024 festival "in the books" when we began planning for 2025. The date for our festival will be May 3, 2025. Cooking will begin after the new year and, as in the past, it will require "all hands-on deck" for us to make the amount of food we need to serve our guests. Watch for Father Aaron to send out the Sign-Up Genius as soon as cooking dates are finalized.

We would like to ask everyone if they would consider trying to take one day (or one-half day) the week prior to the festival to help us with final preparations. It is a big undertaking to prepare for opening our doors to over 1,000 people. This is a parish family event and we hope to have everyone's participation.

The Mediterranean Festival Team

**PRISON MINISTRY TEAM
ANNUAL MEETING REPORT 2024**

For over a decade, I have been ministering to several inmates throughout the state of Kansas. I minister to them by making monthly or bi-monthly in-person visits (depending on their location), corresponding with them electronically as needed, and by coordinating support for them with our national organization, Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM). In addition, our administrative assistant, Frankie Jones, ensures these inmates receive our weekly bulletins and each issue of The Scroll. Perhaps most importantly, myself and many parishioners have helped re-integrate into church and our broader society a few inmates I used to visit in prison who have now been released. All of them will tell you their life has been greatly blessed and enriched by our parish and our parishioners.

I am pleased that over the past couple of years, several parishioners have joined in this ministry to local/Kansas inmates with me. This, of course, is in addition to several of our parishioners who have been involved on the Board level or as employees of OCPM; and to a couple of parishioners who have dedicated their career to helping inmates through their jobs with the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC). One of my proudest moments was when a former inmate started to join me on some of my visits with those currently incarcerated. He has served as an example, an encouragement, and a hope for those still in prison. They see, through him, that they may also someday have a better life.

At this time, I also have a few members of the prison ministry team corresponding electronically with inmates through the KDOC's electronic communications network. If anyone is interested in this type of ministry, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss.

At present, I am currently visiting one inmate in Hutchinson; one in Larned; and two in Ellsworth. Two of these men are already Orthodox (both were chrismated several years ago while incarcerated); two others are catechumens. I ask that all of you keep these men in your prayers, as well as remembering their families and all those in our parish who serve them.

Yours in Christ,

Fr Aaron Warwick

The Treehouse

2024 General Report

Jaleen Claassen, Executive Director

It is with a grateful heart the staff of The Treehouse reflect on another year of service by helping women and children struggling through difficult situations. I recently found the original Treehouse brochure produced in 2002. "The Treehouse is a charitable ministry designed to assist women and their babies who are enduring difficult circumstances. It is a non-profit organization founded by members of the Orthodox Christian community of Wichita, KS. By offering baby supplies, spiritual sustenance, nurturing programs, and other resources, The Treehouse supports the courageous life-affirming decisions of these new mothers and the needs of their babies."

Our mission has remained steadfast, while our programs continue to grow. We thank God for 22 years of service and pray for His continued guidance.

2024 Accomplishments (January to September)

- 305 in-house classes were offered to moms in English and Spanish.
- 1,702 classroom visits by moms.
Classes rotate between parenting, spiritual growth, life skills, and healthy relationships.
- 2,433 Online educational classes completed
- 55 car seats and 40 layettes have been earned through our Earn While You Learn program.
- New Pregnancy and Postpartum program that includes one-on-one support for struggling moms.
- 1st Annual Bingo for Babies event at The Boathouse

Next 12 Months...

- 2nd Annual Bingo for Babies at La Vela, June 20th, 2025. (Sponsorships Available)
- Launch St. Elizabeth Honoree of the Month - The Treehouse will recognize women in the Wichita community who live out The Treehouse mission. These remarkable women generously share God's love, form genuine personal connections, love fearlessly, and make a difference in the lives of babies whether their own or others.
- Continue to provide quality programs paired with material assistance and share God's love through our words and actions to all who walk in our building.

Treehouse Support Staff

Jaleen Claassen, Executive Director
Tamara Woods, Administrative Director
Cristin Coats, Operations Manager
Laura Bisterfeldt, Program Manager
Beth Wasson, Grant Specialist
Kendrea Homan, Playroom Lead
Jennifer Gonzalez, Bilingual Playroom Support
Izabel Kerchan, WSU Master Social Work Intern

Board Members

President, Misha Warren
Vice President, LeeAnn McKinney
Treasurer, Darren Minks
Secretary, Tara Patterson
Hayley Cheatham
Chris Farha
Leyanne Oller
Nicole Sultani
Frank Tritschler
Dr. Janane Zayat

Visitation ministry Annual Report 2024

This small group exists to help the Parish Priest with visitation issues. We generally call on parishioners at the request of the clergy or close family members. We seek to help St. Mary fulfill her mission and vision by keeping parishioners in contact with the spiritual family they know and love during the difficult times of their lives.

Our mission statement says, “The Mission of St. Mary Orthodox Christian Church is to worship and honor God by living and sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ through prayer, unconditional love, mercy and service to others.” That mission extends to those among us who are sick, homebound, isolated, lonely and even imprisoned.

Our team also sends greeting cards to our homebound, elderly and the inmates the priest visits in prison on their birthdays and other special occasions.

The Visitation ministry consists of Rick and Tanya Husselman and Shanna and Iris Binkley. We have a donor who generously provides the cards and the postage comes from the general church budget.

We don't always notice who hasn't been to liturgy lately. If you know someone has been absent for a while please let us know and we will confer with the clergy.

Yours in Christ,

Rick Husselman