

St. Mary Protection of the Theotokos Parish

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**GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST!
GLORY FOREVER!**

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**An Absolute Barrier to Growth:
The Parking Lot** (excerpted from “The Strategic Church” at albiston.com)

There are many incremental barriers to church growth – problems that add up over time to drive people away. These are things that, by themselves, will merely slow growth down, but won’t start to kill your church unless they are allowed to add up. For example, bad preaching, poor music, and an unfriendly atmosphere each may not completely stop your church from growing, but added together they certainly will! *If you have been spending a lot of time and effort to overcome these kinds of barriers and are still not experiencing significant growth, you might be facing an absolute barrier that is capable of completely killing church growth.* The insidious nature of this barrier, is that it is very easy for church visitors to see, but almost impossible to see if you happen to be a church leader – especially if you happen to be a pastor.

Last year I had a conversation with a colleague of mine who was unable to grow his newest church. In his moment of frustration I asked what his parking lot looked like 10 minutes after the service started. His Children’s Pastor piped up at that moment and said that ... the parking lot was packed without room for a single additional car. That is when the light came on!

We don’t live in the 1800’s where we all walk to the local neighborhood church. We drive. We park. We go to church. If people can’t come to your church, they can’t go to your church. It’s really that simple. It doesn’t matter how big your sanctuary is, and it doesn’t matter how good of a preacher you have. If people can’t get into your parking lot they will never get into your building.

How do you overcome this barrier? Several ways. One is that you buy up adjacent land and expand your parking lot. Another is that you start a second (or third) service and use the same parking lot more than once. You could also consider church planting or becoming a multi-site church. Finally, you can sell your property and build again – this time with decent parking. Going to multiple services is the least expensive and the fastest option, building a new building is the most expensive and slowest option – everything else fits in-between.

December Worship Schedule

Sunday	12/11	9:00AM	Divine Liturgy, Coffee Hour, Education
Tuesday	12/13	10:00AM	St. Andrew; Divine Liturgy
Saturday	12/17	4:00PM	Cathedral Vigil (Chapel)
Sunday	12/18	9:00AM	Divine Liturgy, Coffee Hour, Education
Monday	12/19	10:00AM	St. Nicholas; Divine Liturgy
Wednesday	12/21	4:00PM	Cathedral Vigil of the Conception of St. Mary
Thursday	12/22	10:00AM	Divine Liturgy of the Conception of St. Mary
Saturday	12/24	4:00PM	Cathedral Vigil of the Holy Forefathers
Sunday	12/25	9:00AM	Divine Liturgy, Coffee Hour, Education
Saturday	12/31	4:00PM	Cathedral Vigil of the Saturday before Nativity
Sunday	1/1	9:00AM	Divine Liturgy, Coffee Hour, Education, Greening of the Sanctuary
Friday	1/6	9:00AM	Royal Hours of Nativity (Church)
		8:00PM	Great Compline of the Nativity w/Litya (Church)
Saturday	1/7	9:00AM	Divine Liturgy of the NATIVITY

Check our website for the full listing of services & activities!!

Adult Education

Sunday (11AM). This week we are continuing our Advent “Spiritually Speaking” series on the geography, prophesies, and hymns/poetry of the Nativity. This week Fr. Anthony will share some of the prophesies about the Nativity.

Wednesday (7PM). Bible Study. This coming week we will begin the book of Exodus. We’ll also talk about the book itself and the culture and religion of Egypt (the place where the Jews were held in slavery).

St. Mary's has a website (that includes weekly bulletins and an up to date calendar), a Facebook page, and an e-mail list (let Judy know if you would like to be added!); now the parish board, in an attempt to further improve our communication with parishioners and the community, **we are starting a phone text messaging service.** This would include reminders about services and events, funerals, and (should the need arise) cancelations and reschedulings. If you would like to be added to the St. Mary's text messaging list, please give your cell phone number to Fr. Anthony.

Welcome to the God-loving and God-protected Orthodox Christian parish of *Pokrova* (“St. Mary Protection of the Holy Theotokos” or “St. Mary’s”)!

It is a blessing to have you with us today and we encourage you to come back as often as you are able. Like us, you may find that you have found your spiritual home here (and a wonderful home, it is)!

We are a parish of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA under the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople and our doors and hearts are open to you, your family, and your friends!

December 11th; The Entrance of the Virgin Mary into the Temple

The Order of Worship

(A more complete version is found in the black prayer book in the pews)

Blessed is the Kingdom Amen. Heaven and earth are joined in praise of God.

Great Litany. Prayers of supplication to God w/ refrain “Lord have mercy!”

Psalm 102. The Psalms are the greatest hymns of the Church. It is followed by a Small Litany (“Again and again...”).

Psalm 145 & “Only Begotten Son”. This psalm and song remind us why we are here. It is followed by a Small Litany (“Again and again...”)

The Beatitudes. The wisdom of the Logos offered in song – beautiful consolation. We take on the virtues of and in Christ to become “blessed.”

The Little Entrance/Gospel Entrance. This symbolizes Christ coming from heaven into the world. We can kiss the Gospel (an icon of “The Word”) in celebration saying; “Christ is in our midst” “He is and shall be!” “*Khristos Posered Nas*” “*I Ye I Budet*”

Hymns for Today. As with all the music, everyone is encouraged to sing along!

Tone 8 Tropar *(Resurrection)*

You descended from on high, O Merciful One! / You accepted the three day burial to free us from our sufferings!//O Lord, our Life and Resurrection, glory to You!

Tone 4 Tropar *(Pokrova)*

O Mother of God, sheltered by thy coming / we faithful people today keep feast in joy,/ and looking at thy most pure image, / moved to the depths of our hearts, we say:/ “Protect us with thy precious veil /and deliver us from every ill, // by entreating Christ, thy Son and our God, to save our souls.

Tone 8 Kondak *(Resurrection)*

By rising from the tomb, You raised the dead and resurrected Adam. / Eve exults in Your Resurrection, // and the world celebrates Your rising from the dead, O greatly Merciful One!

Tone 2 Kondak *(Parish Patron/Pokrova)*

The Choirs of Saints and the Virgin / stand in church praying to God for us. / Angels and hierarchs bow in adoration, / Apostles and Prophets all rejoice / in thee, O Mother of God, // who for us prays to God Eternal.

Trisagion: We join the angels in proclaiming God’s glory (Holy God, Holy Immortal...)!

Prokimen Tone 8 *(Resurrection; Psalm 75 11, 1)*

Pray and make your vows before the Lord, our God!

v: In Judah God is known; His name is great in Israel.

Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-6

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! *(Psalm 94:1, 2)*

v: Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior!

v: Let us come before His face with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!

Gospel: Luke 13:10-17. Children are encouraged to come up front; “Let the little children come unto me.” (Matthew 19:14)

Litanies for the Faithful and for the Catachumens. Catachumens are Christians preparing to enter into the Mysteries of the Orthodox Church.

Cherubic Hymn. This song reminds us that we must “put aside all earthly cares” so that we can join the angels in worshipping God in fullness and in truth.

The Great Entrance. The priest brings out the bread and wine that will become the Body and Blood of Christ. The ritual reminds us of Palm Sunday... and the Passion of Christ. The children are welcome and encouraged to line the aisle.

Commemoration of the Last Supper and Consecration of the Gifts. This is when the Holy Spirit comes down and changes the gifts. Ukrainian Orthodox often kneel during this part of the liturgy, but standing is also welcome.

Hymn to the Birthgiver of God, Mary. We praise her among the saints because God became incarnate through her; she is the mother of our salvation!

Litany of Preparation. Lord’s Prayer. Please join us as pray together using the words Jesus the Messiah taught us during His earthly ministry.

“Holy Things for the Holy”. We enter into the greatest Mystery of Communion.

Communion of the Faithful. Communion is reserved for those who are members of an Orthodox parish and have prepared themselves through prayer, fasting, and regular confession. All are invited to join this parish and commune with us! See Fr. Anthony if you would like to learn more.

Post-Communion Prayers, Dismissal & Distribution of the Antidoron. At this point everyone is invited forward to kiss the cross and receive the blessed bread cut from the Eucharistic loaf before the service.

Parish News and Events

The Grief Support Group is offering everyone who is grieving the loss of a loved one special one-session classes on “Surviving the Holidays”! Christmas brings a special kind of stress to the lives of the heartbroken. Dates are 12/13,12/20, 12/27. The next 13 week session starts on 1/10.

Please plan to attend our special St. Mary's “Holy Supper” on 1/6 in the parish hall before Great Compline. See Chris Z. for details (and if you want to request or sign-up for a dish – although both are optional). **All are invited!!!**

Members of St. Mary's have been invited to join **St. Elizabeth's Credit Union** in Northampton. If you are interested, see Fr. Anthony for more information and a letter confirming your membership.

Our **Ukrainian Dance Group** meets on Wednesday evenings from 6:30-8:00PM.

St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church (OCA) in Bethlehem (980 Bridle Path Road) is having their **Christmas Concert** today at 3:30.



Reading and Greeter Schedule (December & January)

Date	Epistle Schedule	Greeters
12/11	Dennis Ritter	Judy Miller & Vera Muzychka
12/18	Joseph Truchan	Richard Rosko
12/25	Nik Fartuch	Eleanor Fox
1/1	Reader Nicholas	Judy Miller & Vera Muzychka
1/8	Reader James	Richard Rosko
1/15	John Sokalsky	Eleanor Fox
1/22	Robert Noecker	Judy Miller & Vera Muzychka
1/29	Alex Mackiewicz	Richard Rosko
2/5	Richard Bodner	Eleanor Fox
2/12	Robin Bodner	Judy Miller & Vera Muzychka

Please let Fr. Anthony know if you will not be able to greet/read and cannot find a replacement. Also let him know if you would like to be added to the schedule!

Today's Scripture Readings

Epistle: Ephesians 4:1-6. I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

From St. John Chrysostom: How is it possible to “walk worthily” with “all lowliness”? Meekness is the foundation of all virtue. If you are humble and are aware of your limits and remember how you were saved, you will take this recollection as the motive for every excellent moral behavior. You will not be excessively impressed with either chains or privileges. You will remember that all is of grace and so walk humbly.... “With all lowliness,” he says, not in words only or even in deeds but more so in the very manner and tone of your voice. And not meek toward one person and rude toward another but humble toward everyone, whether enemy or friend, great or small. Homily on Ephesians 9 (4:1-3)

Gospel: Luke 13:10-17. Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. But when Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, “There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day.”

The Lord then answered him and said, “Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?” And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

From St. Cyril of Alexander: The incarnation of the Word and his assumption of human nature took place for the overthrow of death, destruction and the envy harbored against us by the wicked Serpent, who was the first cause of evil. This plainly is proved to us by facts themselves. He set free the daughter of Abraham from her protracted sickness, calling out and saying, “Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.” A speech most worthy of God, and full of supernatural power! With the royal inclination of his will, he drives away the disease. He also lays his hands upon her. It says that she immediately was made straight. It is now also possible to see that his holy flesh bore in it the power and activity of God. It was his own flesh, and not that of some other Son beside him, distinct and separate from him, as some most impiously imagine. Commentay on Luke, Homily 96.