

**ST. MATTHEW THE EVANGELIST  
ANTIOCHIAN  
ORTHODOX CHURCH  
MAY, 2023, NEWSLETTER  
10383 ALBION ROAD, N. ROYALTON, OH 44133  
P.O. Box 33183, N. Royalton, OH 44133**

**Father Andrew's Contact Info: [fatherharmon@outlook.com](mailto:fatherharmon@outlook.com)  
cell: 440-539-1116 home: 440-826-0662 church: 440-582-5673  
Website: [www.stmattroyalton.org](http://www.stmattroyalton.org)**

**SATURDAY VESPERS—5 p.m.  
SUNDAY MATINS—8:50 a.m. SUNDAY LITURGY—10 a.m.  
CONFESSION—after Vespers and during Sunday Matins & by  
appointment.**

**EXTRA SERVICES IN MAY**

**ASCENSION DAY IS THURSDAY, MAY 25. ON THIS GREAT  
HOLY DAY WE CELEBRATE THE ASCENSION OF JESUS  
CHRIST TO HEAVEN 40 DAYS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION.**

**Our Schedule: Wednesday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, the eve of the Feast. Vespers with Artoklasia,  
6:30 p.m.**

**Thursday, May 25<sup>th</sup>---Festal Matins, 9 a.m.; Liturgy, 10 a.m.; Potluck feast afterwards**

**PARISH ORGANIZATIONS, STUDY GROUPS, MINISTRY TEAMS**

**PATHWAYS TO PEACE—BOTH IN PERSON AT CHURCH AND BY ZOOM—Each  
Monday, 7:15 pm. “A gathering place for those who are broken from hurts, hang-ups, or habits.  
Join us as we renew our minds and encourage each other through the love of Christ.” Call  
Deacon Basil, 440-665-3591, for Zoom information.**

**WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP—Friday, May 19, 1 p.m. All women welcome! The location is  
at Tara Reidy's, 274 Elmwood, Berea. For more info, call Sandy Tolbert, 440-773-9162. We're  
reading and discussing the book, “The Ascetic of Love.”**

**WEST BIBLE STUDY—Saturday, May 27, 6 pm at the church. Studying I Corinthians.**

**SOUTH BIBLE STUDY—Tuesday, May 2 & 16, at Craig & Cindy George's, 9451 Sherwood  
Trail, Brecksville. All are welcome. The study will be on the first part of Genesis.**

**TEEN CLUB—Monthly meeting after liturgy, Sunday, May 28.**

**YOUNG ADULT BIBLE STUDY Saturday, May 20, 6 p.m. On the book of Daniel. If you  
want more info, please contact the study leaders: Subdeacon Samuel Harmon, 216-  
598-9230, [samuelharmon15@gmail.com](mailto:samuelharmon15@gmail.com) or Colton Bose, 440-567-  
6101, [coltonmichaelbose@gmail.com](mailto:coltonmichaelbose@gmail.com)**

**MARTHA MINISTRIES IS NOW UNDERWAY**—This is a ministry to provide meals for families in need of some help—new babies, illness, grieving, etc. If you can help, see/email/call Erin Musarra at 440-799-0838.

**ST. HERMAN'S MINISTRY TEAM**—Contact Deacon Basil, 440-665-3591 to help with our monthly meal serving at the shelter on Sunday, May 21.

**MONTHLY DELIVERY OF FOOD, CLOTHING, ETC. TO HOMELESS ON STREETS OF DOWNTOWN CLEVELAND**---Sunday, May 21. Alms box to help this outreach is near hall entrance.

**HOMESCHOOL ENRICHMENT GROUP**---Friday, May 12, 9 a.m.

**CHESS CLUB**—After church, Sunday, May 28.

**PARISH WOMEN'S GROUP MEETING**---After liturgy, Sunday, May 7th

**LAST DAY OF SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES BEFORE SUMMER BREAK—MAY 14<sup>TH</sup>.**

**ORTHODOX FAMILY CAMP OUT::** Join us on Saturday May 27th and Sunday May 28th for an old-fashioned Family Camp Out on our beautiful Church grounds. Come with your tent to stay overnight or just come for the day/evening! Field games, softball, volleyball, Orthodox programming, cookout, campfire and SMORES! Old, young, and everyone in between are welcome. **COMPLETELY FREE TO ATTEND** - so invite a friend or three! Contact Al Blazek or Susan Blazek to RSVP, 440-799-2488 or [susan.blazek@gmail.com](mailto:susan.blazek@gmail.com).

#### **NEW PARISHIONERS IN APRIL**

##### **CHRISTIAN & NARMEEN MORTON**

**Zayna**

2071 w. 105<sup>TH</sup> Street

Cleveland 44102

216-333-5958

[Khadairmorton@outlook.com](mailto:Khadairmorton@outlook.com)

*Please welcome our new parishioners to our parish and add them to your directory.*

##### **VICTORIA RODGERS**

3417 Tilling Street

New Albany, OH 43054

516-640-7298

[Victoria.rodgers@aol.com](mailto:Victoria.rodgers@aol.com)

#### **NEW CATECHUMENS IN APRIL----Kyle McGregor, Narmeen & Zayna Morton**

##### **CONGRATULATIONS TO-----**

--Bryson, the 4 year old son of Steven Morgan, who entered the Orthodox Faith by Baptism on April 23

--Catechumen Narmeen Morton who entered the Orthodox Faith by Baptism, and to her daughter, Zayna, who entered the Orthodox Faith by Chrismation-----both on April 27<sup>th</sup>

--to Catechumen Victoria Rodgers who entered the Orthodox Faith by Chrismation on April 30<sup>th</sup>

---Maximos, son of Cole & Danyelle Gest, who was Churched on April 30<sup>th</sup>

---to Christian & Narmeen Morton on their wedding on April 27<sup>th</sup>.

---to Savio, 6 years old, and Christiano, 4 years old, sons of Wassim & Ornella Mahfouz, who entered the Orthodox Faith by Chrismation on April 25<sup>th</sup>.

---to Adam & Ashley Daher on the birth of their daughter, Stella Rose on April 19<sup>th</sup>.

## THE TRANSGENDER MOVEMENT AND THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAITH

I am sure you are not surprised but I (and probably all priests) get asked often lately about the transgender movement. It's the popular topic lately and all over all the types of media. Controversies abound. So what does our Orthodox Church believe about all this?

The basic answer to that question is given to us by God at the very beginning of the Bible, in the first chapter. As we read in Genesis 1: 27—"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them." Pretty obvious words----- God created our human race with two genders. Only two, not the dozens that some now claim exist. So if someone says they are "non-binary" (having no gender) or both genders at once, or some other gender on a list of imaginary genders, they are mistaken. That person is either male or female---a she or a he, not a "they".

And also important----a person cannot change from one gender to another. Whatever you are born as is who you are. A person can claim to be the other gender, they can dress as if in the other gender, they can act as if in the other gender, they can take hormones to make it seem they might be another gender, and, most horrible of all, they can have surgeries done to mutilate their bodies---removing organs, "building" fake organs, etc. But that doesn't change the reality. Whatever you are born as is what you will always be, whether you believe it or not, or want it or not. I heard a good illustration of this truth last week. If you wish to change genders and have all the above things done...and then you die in a house fire; and there is so little of you left that the authorities can't tell who you are or what gender you are..... They would do a quick genetic test and find out what gender you are. And it will be what you were at birth.

What should be our response to transgender people? Some of them have mental health type problems, some are just depressed and stressed by life and imagine that something drastic like changing gender will solve their problems (it doesn't! Suicide rates are high among transgender people). And I think many involved in this get involved mainly because it right now is trendy and also a way to express a rebellious attitude. Anger at them, hatred toward them, mocking them---as Orthodox Christians we should certainly not do those things, although we certainly should wish to see laws, education, culture, etc. to be discouraging about such things instead of encouraging. And children should, of course, be off-limits to surgeons who would be willing to mutilate them. It's all too reminiscent of "medical care" at Auschwitz 80 years ago!

So if we know someone caught up in all this, should we try to avoid them? No, we should pray for them, love them as we should love any lost soul, and befriend them. Becoming a friend to a transgender person hopefully opens the possibility that some day they will realize they have had enough of the madness---and perhaps you will be the one they turn to be led to the light.

And, finally, invite them to the Divine Liturgy. Hopefully, here they will get a glimpse of the light of God---and that may be the experience that leads them to leave the darkness and delusion they are in and to start wanting the love of God in their lives.

---Father Andrew

**GIANT HOMELESS MISSION** took place on April 29 and 30<sup>th</sup> (with food preparation already under way on April 27 & April 28. Hundreds of sack lunches and many hot meals and Bibles given out to the homeless both on the streets of Cleveland and in two homeless shelters. Many thanks and God's blessings to all who helped in many ways-----donating, making lunches and meals, driving, distributing, etc.! Special thanks to Jon Scordos and Jack Palivoda.... You gave some light to folks who face a lot of darkness day to day...

**CHRIST IS  
RISEN!**

**TRULY HE IS  
RISEN!**

**OUR CURRENT CATECHUMENS**----We pray for them at each liturgy. Please pray for them during the week as they prepare to enter the Orthodox Faith by either Baptism or Chrismation.

Will Parker

Jamie & Lucas Domonokos

Tammy DeRossett

Mariya Butt

Kyle McGregor

Mikaela Cihon

Leigh Frank

### NEW MINISTRY BEGINNING AT ST. MATTHEW'S

St. Matthew's is now officially affiliated with OCLife, a "non-profit organization dedicated to equipping the Orthodox Christian community to strengthen its commitment to the sacredness of human life from conception to death, illuminating the Church's teaching on life issues through education and engagement." If you would like to get involved in this new ministry, please contact Lisa Palivoda at [ldpal1703@outlook.com](mailto:ldpal1703@outlook.com) or Cindy George at [cindygeorge127@gmail.com](mailto:cindygeorge127@gmail.com).

### OUR CHURCH FAMILY MEET-UP

This is a story about God's great love for someone who had all but given up on his life and for the miraculous transformation that took place.

Steven Morgan was born on July 21, 1991, and grew up in the Akron area. His father had a career in IT. His mother was a faithful member of St. Eugene Catholic Church in which she raised her children. As the youngest in the family and being treated as such, he developed an inferiority complex, according to Steven. However, he had good parents and a stable home life, although he felt his parents were too restrictive and protective of him. This kept him from developing friendships. He describes his early life as boring and lonely. "Too normal," he says. At 14, his hormones kicked in and he suffered from more intense loneliness and depression. It was at that time he decided that God did not exist because he couldn't feel Christ was with him.

Then at age 16, his parents became drastically lax and suddenly he was able to go out and experience many new things, which led him to making a lot of new friends. With these new friends in his life, soon came the chance to experiment with drugs. He started out with smoking marijuana. His academic performance had been declining since 5th grade, but in his senior year of high school, he started making straight A's. This led him to think that the drugs made him smarter. The drugs as well as the new friends suddenly made his depression and loneliness seemingly disappear.

When he was 17, he was over-prescribed pain pills for a minor fracture. He did not really need them, but he decided to try one and was surprised how good it made him feel. He had been taught in school how horrible these pills were and would kill you if you used them. Steven thinks that the schools should be more honest—to admit that at first it feels really good, but it's not until a period of time later when things go south.

After graduating from high school, Steven enrolled at the University of Akron. In his post-high school days, he had also started selling drugs to his friends. He got caught and was given a "slap on the wrist." He said he wishes that he would have experienced more harsh sentencing. He says that people who are forced to get treatment/incarceration are more likely to

quit using sooner than those who keep trying on their own. He dropped out after the third semester (2012) due to a drug-related DUI.

When he got into psychedelics, he became receptive to spirituality but avoided Christianity at all costs. He had an affinity for Taoism but ultimately remained “spiritual, not religious.”

He got a job working for Chipotle and started to clean up his legal issues. There with his co-workers, he integrated into a group of really tight-knit friends. However, at the beginning of 2014, most of that Chipotle group went on to other jobs or moved away, leaving Steven very lonely again.

After Steven lost his group of Chipotle friends, he decided to reconnect with some of his older friends, one of which was his best friend, James, who he had given his drug business over to when he had stopped selling. Since he had seen James last, James had escalated his business to selling heroin. Steven asked to try it for the first time. He found that it made him feel really great. He thought to himself that he was able to handle it and not get hooked like most people. Soon he had to increase his dosage because he felt restless and had trouble sleeping. About five months into starting with heroin, he realized that he was hooked. Because of his increased usage, occasionally he would take too much. He fell asleep standing up in front of the customers at Chipotle and they had to fire him.

Then in August of 2015, James had an overdose in his car and died. This really shook Steven up. He had thought that these kind of things only happen to other people. He knew that if it happened to James, it could also happen to him. Steve was desperate to stop, unhappy with his life circumstances and was becoming suicidal. In 2016, he attempted to take his life by overdosing on heroin. When he came to, he told his parents and then checked himself into the psych ward. He was then sent to a treatment center, but discharged prematurely by his insurance. Two or three days after his release, he started using again.

After several overdoses and suicide attempts, most of which were secret failed attempts, Steven went home to live with his parents. Throughout his drug using, Steven partook in many questionable activities in order to buy drugs. One that caused a tipping point was that he forged a check from his parents' account. Steven had accidentally overdosed with the heroin he bought with that money. This incident led his parents to discovering what he had done, and they told Steven that he had to get help or they would call the police and have him arrested for stealing from them. Steven found help at the Salvation Army Rehab Center. He stayed there for 6 months and graduated from the program. While there he had to work for them sorting clothes. After that, he went to a sober house to live. After 4 months, he started using again. Falling quickly back into despair, he tried to kill himself there by overdosing, but at the last minute changed his mind. His roommate found him and called 911. He then went back to the Salvation Army. While there, he met Melanie, who became the mother of his child.

Steven has looked back on all the close encounters he's had with death, especially the last one. This he sees in hindsight as the first re-connection with God in him because his whole mindset had shifted.

Steven was gradually getting better, although his relationship with Melanie proved to be mutually toxic throughout most of their time together. On March 16, 2019, he and Melanie had a

baby boy, named Bryson. Steven had always wanted to be a father. The birth of Bryson profoundly changed him. He describes it as knocking the agnosticism out of him.

One of Steven's main interests had been politics. Some time around 2020, he began to focus on bitcoin as well. One recurring guest on many shows he listened to happened to be a recently baptized Orthodox Christian whose name was Vin Armani. He had a similar psychedelic background as Steven. Through Vin's online community, Steven started talking to other Orthodox Christian listeners. He was told to read the book, "Christ the Eternal Tao," by Hieromonk Damascene, who is abbot of St. Herman Monastery in California. This book really spoke to Steven, especially as someone interested in Chinese culture and language, which Steven had studied while attending college.

Steve and Melanie broke up shortly after Steve's initial exposure to Orthodoxy. At this tumultuous time, Steven was able to clearly see that he had two paths to choose from. He could go down his old path of drugs which he was very tempted to do or he could go down the path to light. He sincerely tried to take the second path, though he'd been an unbeliever for so long. For the next three months, he started writing down prayers to Christ, even though he felt they were in vain. Then he asked God for the courage to visit a church. In October of 2021, he emailed Annunciation Orthodox Church in Akron. Father Nick answered and encouraged him to come visit. When he entered the Orthodox church building for the first time, it was the beginning of matins and he was the only one there aside from the priest. He walked in and the first thing he saw was the Platytera (the big icon of the Theotokos over the altar). It hit him like a ton of bricks. He felt that Mary was inviting him to come home. Tears started flowing from his eyes. Fr. Nick approached him and said, "Hey, you're in the right place." Steven felt like he was in heaven for the entire service.

Steven was looking for stability in his life. The chanting, the participation, the senses, the incense all drew him in. Steven thought back to that day and said, "I could feel the power and that God was present." Every liturgy from then on, he felt compelled to come to church. He describes it as a calling. "I have never had so much conviction." He spent 11 months at Annunciation. June of 2022, a friend at the church told him about Pathway to Peace at St. Matthew's. He was encouraged by his priest to start attending recovery group meetings, and the Pathway meeting seemed like a perfect fit. Eventually, he switched over to St. Matthew's and finished his catechism classes here with Father Andrew. Steven was chrismated on March 26, 2023. He had taken Bryson to Annunciation a few times and thought he wasn't getting anything out of it, so he stopped taking him. Then one day months later, unprovoked, Bryson asked his father if he could come to church with him again. Steven was happy to do so and felt it was easier at St. Matthew's because he said, "There are 50 kids running around every Sunday, so what would one more matter?" Bryson was baptized on April 23.

Steven works for The McLean Company, which sells road construction equipment, in a mixed warehouse/customer service role. His dream is to be a reader of audio books. He has a couple on YouTube if you want to check them out. His goals in life are to someday get married with a woman who loves Christ and have his next child **in** wedlock! Until then, he wants to concentrate on making a living, developing his spiritual life, taking care of his son, and to start regularly visiting monasteries.

From 2009 to 2021, Steven struggled. At times he wanted to get well, but he didn't have the power to do it on his own. He spent time in jail, used hard drugs, overdosed several

From 2009 to 2021, Steven struggled. At times he wanted to get well, but he didn't have the power to do it on his own. He spent time in jail, used hard drugs, overdosed several times, and attempted suicide several times. God did for him what he could not do for himself. But with God's help, Steven found the Church and in it he found Jesus Christ, just waiting for him with open arms to come back to Him.



## ST. MATTHEW'S MESSAGE BOARD

Contact Bonnie Harmon if you wish to submit a message.

**BABY SHOWER INVITATION:** All women of the parish are invited to join us in a baby shower to honor Sam and Anna Harmon as they prepare to welcome their baby girl. Saturday, May 6, 2023, 11 a.m., at St. Matthew's. *Just a suggestion: You can, if you wish, bring a children's book and sign your name in it instead of a card. Any book is fine.* Please RSVP to Olivia Harmon at [oharmon15@gmail.com](mailto:oharmon15@gmail.com) or (440)220-2624. Sam and Anna are registered at Amazon.

**FREE TO A GOOD HOME:** 1 Schwinn mountain bike and 1 Concord racing bike. Both in need of minimal maintenance, but in good shape. Tires are new. Call Cindy George at 330-309-9491.

**WORK WANTED:** Young person would like small side jobs such as yard work, cleaning out garages, attics, etc. Call Bonnie at 216-258-4837 for more information.



### *ARTS and SPORTS Summer Camp*

*JUNE 5-9<sup>th</sup>, 2023 9am-noon*

*-choir for ages 8 and up*

*-music and movement for children ages 2-8*

*-drawing using the grid method      -baking*

*-soccer      -ballet*

*Tuition has been generously donated!*

*Please contact Olivia Harmon [oharmon15@gmail.com](mailto:oharmon15@gmail.com) to sign up by May 8*



### THE IOCC CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN COMMITTEE

*invites you to the*

## *31st Annual Banquet*

**Monday, May 8, 2023**

*Dinner 6:00 pm*

**WOODSIDE EVENT CENTER  
AT ST. MICHAEL'S**  
5025 E Mill Rd. | Broadview Heights, OH 44147

Learn how your support is helping families in places like Ukraine, Greece, Syria, Ethiopia, and right here in the US.

Questions? Contact Diane Hastings at [dianehastings3@gmail.com](mailto:dianehastings3@gmail.com) or 440 364 6045







Theotokos of Vladimir

**EASTERN ORTHODOX WOMEN'S GUILD  
OF GREATER CLEVELAND  
SENDS AN OPEN INVITATION  
TO MEMBERS, FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

# Annual

## Pan-Orthodox Luncheon



Holy Trinity Orthodox Church Hall  
6822 Broadview Road  
Parma, OH 44134

**Date:** Saturday, May 13, 2023  
**Time:** Doors open @ 12:00 AM  
Luncheon @ 12:30 PM

**Reservations required  
No tickets sold at the door**  
**Tickets:** Adults - \$15.00  
Children 6 to 12 - 7.50  
Children under 6 - FREE  
See Parish Representatives for tickets

### Program to include:

- A delicious luncheon with good homemade appetizers / desserts
  - **Auction Gift Baskets / Door Prizes**
  - Socialize and relax with family and friends!
- Glòria Zabala*
- > See Parish Representatives for tickets or
  - > Helen Beverly (440-212-5545)
  - > Reservations must be made by Monday, May 8, 2023



All proceeds go to Orthodox organizations  
see list compiled by EOWG -- <https://www.eowgcle.org/charities>



St. Matthew the Evangelist  
Orthodox Church

# Save the DATE

PARISH RETREAT

Father Sergius Bowyer,  
Abbot of St. Tikhon's  
Monastery

August 18 & 19, 2023

Fr. Bowyer will speak on his book  
Acquiring the Mind of Christ:  
Embracing the Vision of the Orthodox Church

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Please call, text or email your  
RSVP to (216)258-4837 or  
[fatherharmon@outlook.com](mailto:fatherharmon@outlook.com)

The miraculous icon of St. Anna,  
the Mother of the Holy Virgin  
Mary, will be brought to St.  
Matthew's on that weekend for  
veneration.

Free Will Offering Will Be Accepted

Diocese of Toledo & the Midwest  
**Parish Life  
 Conference 2023**

**June 28th - July 2nd**  
 Hosted by St. Mary's Orthodox Church  
 Palms Heights, IL

Double Tree - Oak Brook, IL  
 Book your \$99 room today!  
 (+ Free parking)

Scan here  
 to book your room!

Join us for a conference  
 filled with fellowship and  
 spiritual growth for the entire family!

	<b>Keynote Speaker:</b>	<b>Women's Speakers:</b>
Fr. Jeremy Davis	Kather Gabriela	Cynthia Papischlag Molly Sabersky
	<b>Teen Speaker:</b>	<b>Young Adult Speaker:</b>
Fr. Joseph Hancock	Kather Gabriela	Fr. Joseph Hancock
	<b>Young Adult Speaker:</b>	<b>Women's Speakers:</b>
Fr. Joseph Hancock	Fr. Joseph Hancock	Cynthia Papischlag Molly Sabersky

St. Matthew Orthodox Church  
 10383 Albion Road  
 North Royalton, OH 44133

**ANNUAL MOTHERS' DAY BRUNCH (ONE WEEK LATE)---**

**SUNDAY, MAY 21<sup>ST</sup>, RIGHT AFTER LITURGY**

**NO CHARGE, OF COURSE!**

**HOSTED BY OUR PARISH'S BROTHERHOOD CLUB**