



ST. MICHAEL

THE ARCHANGEL

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

DECEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER



St. Michael's is an Eastern Orthodox Christian church. We celebrate the ancient Orthodox liturgies in English:

Vespers at 6:00 pm on Saturdays

Martins at 8:45 am on Sundays

Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am on Sundays

We offer classes about Orthodoxy on Saturdays at 4:00 pm and Tuesdays at 7:00 pm

Check **Highlights** on the next page for this month's schedule.

Please feel welcome to attend our classes and liturgies!

St. Michael's Orthodox Christian Church

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www.facebook.com/stmichaelshuntsvilleal

www.stmichaelshsv.org

Highlights

See also St. Michael's website for calendar.

Dec 02 Saturday:

†4:00 pm Catechumen and Inquirer's Class
†6:00 pm Vespers

Dec 03 Sunday: Forefeast of the Entry of the Most Holy Theotokos

†8:45 am Orthros
†10:00 am Divine Liturgy
12:00 pm Parish Info Meeting
12:30 pm Vespers for the Entry of the Theotokos

Dec 04 Monday: Entrance of the Theotokos

†8:45 am Orthros
†10:00 am Divine Liturgy

Dec 06 Wednesday: †6:00 pm Moleben to St. Michael Nativity Study Group & Fasting Meal following Moleben

Dec 09 Saturday:

†11:00 am Baptism of Sophie Anne Pcsolyar
†6:00 pm Vespers

Dec 10 Sunday of Great-martyr James the Persian

†8:45 am Orthros
†10:00 am Divine Liturgy
†12:00 pm Baptism of Genevieve Neve

Dec 11 Monday: 6:00 pm Church Board Meeting

Dec 13 Wednesday: †6:00 pm Moleben to St. Michael Nativity Study Group & Fasting Meal following Moleben

Dec 16 Saturday:

†4:00 pm Catechumen and Inquirer's Class
†6:00 pm Vespers

Dec 17 Sunday of Great-martyr Barbara and Martyr Juliana

†8:45 am Orthros
†10:00 am Divine Liturgy
12:15 pm Visit from St. Nicholas
3:30 pm Caroling at The Neighborhood

Dec 20 Wednesday: †6:00 pm Moleben to St. Michael Nativity Study Group & Fasting Meal following Moleben

Dec 23 Saturday: †6:00 pm Vespers

Dec 24 Sunday of the Holy Forefathers

†8:45 am Orthros
†10:00 am Divine Liturgy
†12:00 pm Vespers for St. Herman of Alaska

Dec 25 Tuesday: St. Herman of Alaska

†8:45 am Orthros
†10:00 am Divine Liturgy

Dec 27 Wednesday: No Moleben or Nativity Study Group

Dec 30 Saturday: †6:00 pm Vespers

Dec 31 Sunday of the Holy Fathers

†8:45 am Orthros
†10:00 am Typica by Charles Malmede

Coffee Hour

Dec 03: Litter	Jan 07: Platt, Cox
Dec 10: Mahafza	(Nativity Potluck)
Dec 17: Malmede/Ballews	Jan 14: Sievers
Dec 24: Novak	Jan 21: Tanner, Portillo
Dec 31: Pcsolyar	

Birthdays

Dec 10: Andrew Haddock	Dec 31: Kim Gilbert
Dec 12: Pat Darzi	
Dec 22: Jude Litter	
Dec 28: Peyton Zarzaur	

Anniversaries

Dec 19: Phil & Serena Harwell

Save the Date

Women's Book Study

For details about the Book Study, please check with Stephanie Litter or Madi Terry.

Nativity Study Group & Fasting Meal

(Following the 6:00 pm Moleben. Please **RSVP** Fr. Gregory)

Dec 06: Wednesday	Dec 13: Wednesday
Dec 20: Wednesday	

The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ on Sunday, Jan 07:

Potluck to be coordinated by Michele Platt and Robbie Cox

The **Annual Schultz Christmas Party** on Friday, January 12, 6 - 10 pm at 290 Maplewood Dr, Madison, AL 35758.

The Catholic Condemnation of the Filioque Conference

(March 14–16 at Lake Guntersville State Park Lodge)

To find out more and to register, please visit
<https://uncutmountainpress.com/shop/product/conference-8th-oecumenical>

Annual Retreat (Thursday June 6 – Sunday June 9, Dec 2024)

The **10th Annual St. Michael's Retreat** on Monte Sano with speaker **Dr. Mark Tarpley**. Contact Deacon Fr. Benjamin Litter (bdlitter@gmail.com) to reserve your campsite. Call Monte Sano for cabins: 256-534-6589. Don't wait too long!

Thanks To

Hal and Vivienne Pastrick for donating a 9 foot **Christmas tree** to St. Michael's Church and thanks to Rick Kaiser for using his truck to transport it and set it up in the Church Hall.

Serena Harwell for coordinating the **St. Michael Slava potluck** and to Rick and Michele Kaiser for hosting it at the Edgewater Clubhouse. There were a lot of volunteers to set up and take down.

PARISH NEWS

FEASTS

Last month, we celebrated the **St. Michael Parish Patronal Slava and Feast** meal on Sunday, Nov. 19th, at the Edgewater Clubhouse. St. Michael's is now 21 years old! Our Annual Assembly meeting was held following the meal highlighting the past year's events.

PARISH EVENTS

On Sunday, November 29th, our very own Sub-Deacon Benjamin Litter was ordained to the Diaconate at St. Sava's Serbian Church in Merrillville, Indiana. Stephanie, Jude and Matthias Litter, Kim Gilbert and the Ramirez family were also in attendance. Axios! What a great blessing to have our first Deacon at St. Michael's after 21 years!

The **Women's Book Club** continued reading Seven Holy Women—Conversations with Saints and Friends.

We also continued the Moleben/Akathist services on Wednesday evenings to ask for heavenly intercession and support in the building of our new church.

CATECHUMEN & INQUIRERS CLASSES continued on Tuesday evenings at 7:00pm and Saturday afternoons at 4:00pm.

NEW PROPERTY UPDATE

We are now almost at the finish line! Our new General Contractor has initiated the process of obtaining a building permit. Our Bank is finishing up the all the loan documents. Once we have closed on the loan and signed off on the construction contract, we will officially be underway.

In the meantime, the water utilities are nearly completed and our Civil Engineer has been working with Huntsville Utilities to set up the electrical service.

Please keep praying for this new church building that everything will continue to move forward without any obstacle!



LOOKING AHEAD

CATECHUMEN & INQUIRERS CLASSES

Classes will continue on Saturday, December 2nd and Saturday, December 16th at 4:00 pm. Please see the December calendar for more information.

NATIVITY STUDY GROUP will continue on Wednesdays following the 6:00 pm Moleben services on Wednesdays, Dec 6th, 13th and 20th. We will have a simple fasting meal (suggested donation \$5.00) and following that we will draw from Holy Scripture and the writings of the Holy Fathers to help us prepare for the Feast of the Nativity (Jan 07).

MOLEBEN & AKATHIST SERVICES

These services will continue on Wednesday evenings at 6:00 pm (please see the calendar for service times).

WOMEN'S BOOK STUDY: will continue during December. Locations will be in various homes. Please check with Stephanie Litter or Madi Terry for locations, dates and times.

CHURCH BOARD MEETING has been scheduled for Monday, December 11th at 6:00pm.



The Nativity Fast

Having just begun the Nativity Fast, now is a good time to reflect on our preparation for the coming Feast of the Nativity of our Lord. It can be a little distracting at this time of year, since we are surrounded by all the usual secular holiday activities. It is always ironic that while the Orthodox Church, since ancient times, has directed us to fast in preparation for Christ's Nativity, our secular culture today begins celebrating the "Christmas Season" (as early as September) with the



holiday shopping, beautiful decorations, rich food and drink, and the usual holiday performances of the Nutcracker ballet, concerts and so on. While there's nothing wrong with these things in and of themselves, it's about the timing. If you were going to celebrate someone's birthday, would you start having cake and presents months in advance? If anything, you would wait until the person's actual birthday.

It was quite common until recent times, that the Christmas tree would put up and decorated on Christmas Eve. Then everyone would go to church to celebrate Christmas and when they came home, reveal the beautifully decorated tree. Presents would be exchanged that evening or the following morning and now the 'Twelve Days of Christmas' would begin to be celebrated.

As Orthodox Christians, our Holy Church gives us the proper way to prepare spiritually and celebrate the Nativity of the Lord. By establishing the forty-day Nativity Fast, we begin the work of spiritual (and bodily) purification. As St. Paul said, *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"* (I Cor. 6:19) Too often, we tend to identify with our body, as if this is who we really are.

Many of us have seen a cicada shell attached to a tree branch or side of our house. It looks like a real insect at first, but when we look more closely, we can see that it just the empty shell. In reality, the juvenile cicada must 'molt' and come out of this hard shell as it transitions to full adulthood. This is one of the many ways that the "Book of Nature" teaches us about life, death and rebirth and provides us with this powerful image. One day, we too will leave the empty shell of our body behind as our souls depart into the other world: our real home. As St. Herman of Alaska once said *"The true Christian is a warrior fighting his way through the regiments of an unseen enemy to his heavenly homeland."*

At one time or another, we've all invited a guest to come to our home for dinner. In preparation, we cleaned the house, straightened things up, put things away, set the table and so on. In the coming Feast of the Nativity, we will invite Christ to come into our hearts. The Nativity Fast is our way of spiritually cleaning our heart, mind, soul and body. In the book *Meditations for Advent*, Fr. Vassilios says, *"Bethlehem becomes a synonym for 'the Church.' Christ is to be born within us: in our mystical celebration we shall become Bethlehem, the humble place of His Nativity, and so we must prepare ourselves in order that our Lord may make His dwelling within us."*

May God's blessings be with you in this Holy Nativity Season!

Around the Parish



Nicholas and Alexandra Neve churching of baby Genevieve



St. Michael's Patronal Slava



Ordination of Fr. Deacon Benjamin Litter



Prayers for the Living

CHURCH MEMBERS AND ORTHODOX FRIENDS Wanda (Christine) Gilbert and Pat Darzi. Please pray for God's help with building of the future Church and hall on our new property on Madison Blvd.

FRIENDS OF MEMBERS, INQUIRERS, AND CATECHUMENS Joseph Bishoff, Rob Christiansen, Scot Dill, Logan & Nathan Hays, Caelan and Tallys Heiss, Sam Johnson, David Reid, Mark & Vanessa Bamford, Mark Lief, Adam Isom & Rachael James.

Prayers for the Reposed

ORTHODOX Alevtina Shiroto, John Driver, Shannon (Brigid) McBride, Dolores Gelemy (Pat Darzi's sister), Anna Kobasa (mother of Helen Bergantz), Monk Maximos Rossi, Alexander Fedoseenko (Oksana Falconbury's father) Matushka Ann Hopko, Madelyn Lloyd, John Leonforte, Larissa Newman, Tamara Savina, Jim Nordness, Patriarch Iriney, Metropolitan Amphiloque, Fr. James Barfield, Carl Brennan, Fr. Michael Vanderhoef, Fr. Patrick Kinder, Bill McKenney, Eli Grba, Fr. Athanasius Shaw, Gennadiy Zhmaylo, Fr. Chris Williamson, Gregory Hughes, Ron Waskerwitz, Christopher Pamfilis, Alexa & Hayden Hannig, Nicolae Caracalean, Olga Gulas, Valentina, Vangie Pamfilis, Milan Petrovic, Boris and Mary Kochoff, Fryni McCreary, Nelia Friedman, Natalie Elliott, Johanna Hargreaves.

NON-ORTHODOX Ted Darzi, Sylvia Gordon.

Confessions

Confession may be heard Saturdays after Vespers, Sunday 9:40-10am before Divine Liturgy, or contact Fr. Gregory to arrange a time. Please come early Sunday morning so we can begin Liturgy by 10:00 am.

Committees / Chairpersons

Deacon: Fr. Deacon Benjamin Litter

Sub-deacons: Bob Zarzaur, Joe Bergantz, Hal Pastrick

Choir Leader Coordinator: Fr. Deacon Benjamin Litter

Choir Leader Director: Emma Pcsolyar

Choir Leaders: Fr. Deacon Benjamin Litter, Bill Tanner, Caleb Eversole, Charles Malmede, Emma Pcsolyar, Matushka Ann.

Readers / Acolytes: Bill Tanner, Caleb Eversole, Steve Cox, Steve Gordon, David Hogan, Rick Kaiser, Jude Litter, Charles Malmede, Ivan and Nikolai Sievers

Sisterhood President: Stephanie Litter

Sisterhood Vice President: Kim Gilbert

Sisterhood Treasurer: Anya Sievers

Sisterhood Secretary: Emma Pcsolyar

Auditors: Sarah Braun, Christine Ramirez, Madi Terry

Sunday School Director: Stephanie Litter

Flower Arranging Coordinator: Christine Ramirez

Bookstore Manager: Matushka Ann

Assistant Bookstore Manager: Erin Terry

Library: Bill Tanner

Building Maintenance: Sub-deacon Bob Zarzaur, Rick Kaiser

Website: Charles Malmede

Facebook, Instagram: Stephanie Litter, Katie Portillo

Newsletter, Annual Calendar: Steve Gordon

Candles, Supplies: Rick Kaiser

Church Council: 2022 to 2023

Parish Administrator: Father Gregory Schultz

Retired Clergy: Archpriest Michael Boyle

President: Sub-deacon Moses (Bob) Zarzaur

Vice President: Michele Platt

Treasurer: Caleb Eversole

Secretary: Rick Kaiser

Members at Large: John Duda, Serena Harwell, Fr. Deacon Benjamin Litter, Charles Malmede, Hal Pastrick

Church telephone number: 256-881-2449.

Please contact Fr. Gregory concerning any pastoral needs.

