Hershey...a Sweet Scene in ‘17

Also Inside:
- Metropolitan Tikhon’s Letter
- Summer Sports in Bethlehem
- National Scholarships Awarded
CONTENTS

SUMMER 2017
VOLUME 92 NUMBER 2

FEATURE STORIES
5  FOCA Celebrates 91st National Convention over Labor Day Weekend
7  St. Tikhon’s Students Attend FOCA Convention
8  National President’s Address at Convention Banquet
9  Our 91st National Convention In Hershey/Harrisburg, PA
12  91st National Convention Photo Gallery
15  Our 91st National Convention In Hershey/Harrisburg, PA (continued)
17  FOCA Convention, September 2, 2017, His Grace Bishop David of Sitka and Alaska
18  Winners of the 2017 Photo Contest Announced
18  Protopresbyter Daniel & Matrushka Evdokia (Dunia) Hubiak, Honored by Metropolitan Tikhon with the Order of St. Innocent, Gold Class
19  Congratulations to the 2017 FOCA National Scholarship Awardees

SPORTS
20  St. John’s Alpha Sponsors the 2017 National Summer Sports Tournament in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, Photo Gallery and Results
21  Transitions: Summer 2017

Kidz Corner
23  St. Archange Michael and All the Angels and Bodiless Powers of Heaven: November 8th

DEPARTMENTS
3  President’s Commentary
4  Editor’s Notes
4  F.O.C.A. Highlights and News-In-Brief
   South River Juniors Hold Meeting, Elect Officers, Make Plans
2  FOCA Calendar 2017-2018
3  Congratulations to the New Jersey District Convention Committee on a Job Well Done!

Back Cover: Metropolitan Tikhon Letter

Front Cover photo credits: The Tamburitzans/Rick Armstrong; St. Nicholas Chapel with northern lights by R. Moon

Visit Our Website: www.orthodoxfellowship.org

FOCA CALENDAR 2017-2018

Sat. October 7: Ohio District Convention, Warren “R” Club, St. John the Baptist Church, Warren, OH
Sat. October 7: Orthodox Education Day, St. Vladimir’s Seminary, Yonkers, NY
Sat. October 14: Colonial District Convention, Nation’s Capital “R” Club, St. Nicholas Cathedral, Washington DC
Sun. October 15: Pittsburgh District Convention, North Suburban #1, St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Allison Park, PA

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The mission of the
Orthodox Christian JOURNAL is to
educate the membership of the Fellowship of
Orthodox Christians in America,
to showcase the talents of its membership
and, in so doing, to propagate the Holy Orthodox Christian Faith.
The Hershey convention may now be just a memory but what a sweet one it is. As usual, I returned home from an FOCA function with conflicting emotions; both encouraged and inspired but also a little sad about leaving the people whom I consider to be my friends in the faith. Thank you to the New Jersey district convention committee for the fabulous job planning our 91st national convention.

A packed Labor Day weekend schedule included time for worship, business, fun and fellowship. Productive business sessions highlighted the strength of our organization. Both new and reactivated chapters were acknowledged, some of whom sent delegates to a national convention for the first time in years. Bids for national conventions, as well as basketball, bowling, and golf tournaments, were awarded as far out as the year 2020! Initiatives such as a choir workshop, a Pan Orthodox youth rally, as well as leadership and management workshops are under development. Additionally, our charitable giving at this convention exceeded $18,500 with the presentation of Gifts of Love donation to the Alaskan church renovation, awarding of national educational scholarships, and a spontaneous floor drive for two vandalized churches in Ohio.

We were blessed to have His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, Archbishop Michael, and Bishop David actively involved in the weekend’s services and business sessions. Even more notable was the release of a Primatial letter in which His Beatitude invites Rectors and Pastors of the Orthodox Church in America to “inquire into the good works of the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America so that those works might be multiplied across the entirety of the Orthodox Church in America.”

This letter sheds some light on the good works of our organization. My hope is that it will not only stimulate new interest and conversation about the organization but also serve as encouragement to all of us to share our story especially with parishes that don’t have an FOCA chapter. Each and every one of us has a responsibility to cultivate interest in the Fellowship.

Throughout our history, the Fellowship has been blessed with a long list of extremely passionate, dedicated, and forward thinking individuals who developed programs, created events, and established initiatives aimed at fulfilling our mission of proclaiming, sharing and revealing our Orthodox Christian Faith through service, fellowship and example. Fortunately, many of those who benefited from this organization are willing to step up in order to see it continue. But, we all need make the Fellowship a priority. Don’t wait to be asked; offer your talents for the betterment of the Fellowship.

Congratulations to the New Jersey District Convention Committee on a Job Well Done!

Daria Miskiv, chair; Eileen Telischak, secretary; Mark Marton, treasurer; Rebecca Kozak & Michael Kupec, Friday event; Stephen Wasilewski, Saturday event; Laura Johnson, Sunday event; Olga Baldowski, tickets; Maryann Bacsik, registration; Ken Baron, ad book & publicity; and President Marge Kovach attended all the meetings.

“HERSHEYLAND” Winners: First heat – Cleveland “R” Club; Second heat – The Steffaro Family; and Best Dressed – Central Pennsylvania District

Orthodox Christian JOURNAL • Summer 2017 3
The Junior chapter, #167-J, of Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in South River, New Jersey recently held its annual meeting and elected officers for the new church year. They are – as shown in the photo – Vice President Vlad Kachur, Secretary Marianna Kachur, President Elizabeth Leoniuk, Vice President Andrew Steffaro and Treasurer Katy Illeyne. At their meeting, the chapter decided to focus on service to our Church and service to others as well as fellowship. The first service project will be to create hygiene bags to send to the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) to help with the hurricane relief effort. Also planned is a “sleep over” at the church hall in the late fall. They are all looking forward to an exciting new year!

– submitted by Arianna Steffaro
The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America [FOCA] held its 91st national convention at the Sheraton Hotel between Hershey and Harrisburg, PA September 1-4, 2017. The annual gathering was sponsored by the New Jersey District.

Highlighting the annual gathering was the issuance of a letter by the FOCA’s spiritual leader, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, expressly endorsing the FOCA for its good works over the decades and encouraging parishes and individuals to participate in its worthy activities and programs. The FOCA also presented this year’s “Gifts of Love” proceeds of $12,500.00 to His Grace, Bishop David of Sitka and Alaska toward the restoration of the historic Saint Nicholas Chapel in Kenai, AK. In addition, a youth council, co-sponsored by the OCA and FOCA, took place under the direction of Priest Benjamin Tucci, the FOCA’s Junior/Youth Director. Also participating in the convention was His Eminence, Archbishop Michael of New York and New Jersey.

Festivities opened on Friday evening with “Hersheyland,” a mouth-watering life-size version of the Candy Land game with eight imaginatively decorated gingerbread men moving across the game board as conventioneers had the opportunity to mingle and get reacquainted. The traditional procession and opening Prayer Service by Metropolitan Tikhon marked the beginning of Saturday’s sessions. A Memorial Service also was celebrated by Archpriest Theodore Boback, FOCA National Spiritual Advisor, and Deacon Peter Ilchuk, the new convention planning chairperson.

National President Marge Kovach then called the convention to order as routine business was undertaken. Archbishop Michael updated delegates on the married student housing project at Saint Tikhon’s Seminary, for which the Fellowship raised $300,000.00 in 2015. Unfortunately, the intended building proved to be unsuitable, so plans are now being made to convert the former orphanage into apartments for married seminarians. “We are forever grateful to the FOCA for this major gift – the largest in your history – and ask for your patience,” said Archbishop Michael. “All of you are invited to attend the opening upon the project’s completion—and rest assured that the Fellowship will be properly recognized.”

In his remarks to the assembly, Metropolitan Tikhon noted that “we are continuing to expand the collaboration between the FOCA and the OCA. Three members of the Holy Synod are here again this year.” He expressed thanks for the FOCA’s many contributions, especially those involving Alaska and married seminarian housing. With reference to the previously mentioned letter, Metropolitan Tikhon said that it “was an easy letter to write, given the FOCA’s generosity.” He continued by stating, “I would like to see you expand your reach and ‘rethink’ the organization. How do you ‘fit in’ in a broader range of parishes, especially in the South and West? I encourage you to continue working with the youth and Bishop David and our new youth director, David Lucs, as well as Father Benjamin Tucci.”

President Kovach then formally presented a ceremonial check for $12,500.00 to Bishop David and Dorothy Gray of the Kenai, AK parish. Mrs. Gray noted that this gift will enable the Kenai faithful to obtain matching funds from historical associations. Bishop David thanked the members “from the bottom of his heart” and noted that last year’s Yupik/English coloring books – funded by the FOCA – have been distributed and also will be given to Yupik Moravian children.

Saturday evening Great Vespers was
celebrated by Father Theodore and Deacon Peter. Basil Kozak directed the choir at services throughout the convention. Conventioneers enjoyed the truly spectacular and inspiring performance by “The Tamburitzans” from Pittsburgh, the renowned folk dance and music troupe of college students who performed a wide range of Balkan, Greek, Spanish, Romanian and other ethnic dances.

The Sunday morning Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was concelebrated by Metropolitan Tikhon, Archbishop Michael, and Bishop David; Archpriests Theodore Boback, William Evansky, and Daniel Ressetar; Priest Benjamin Tucci; Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak and Deacon Peter Ilchuk; and several subdeacons and altar servers. In his homily, Bishop David focused on the parable of the wicked husbandmen and the vineyard, emphasizing that everything is a gift from God. “We are so rich, the richest people who ever lived,” Bishop David observed, “but we seem to always want more and never have enough. What we have is not ours, but God’s, and we must always give back and help others in need.” Following the Liturgy, Metropolitan Tikhon presented Basil Kozak with a primatial gramota for his many years of service as convention choir director.

Sunday afternoon was filled with a variety of informal activities and get-togethers, while the “Fantastic Fare and Sweet Sounds” banquet and dance was held in the evening. On behalf of Metropolitan Tikhon, Archbishop Michael read the aforementioned primatial letter and then delivered his own remarks. “As a bishop, I want to honor your legacy and history, but I also wish to see the Fellowship grow for future generations,” he said. “For next year’s All-American Council in Saint Louis, I encourage you to make and show the most spectacular video possible showcasing your many activities, including the charitable contributions, the sports tournaments, the summer camps, and more. Introduce those attending to the Fellowship and invite them to join this worthy organization, not from a sense of pride but for the work of Christ the Lord, His Gospel and His Church!” In her banquet address, President Kovach cited specific acts of generosity, emphasizing that “this is why we join, this is why we stay, this is why we persevere—not because there is something in it for me, but because together we can make a difference.” She then awarded four $1,000.00 college/university scholarships.

The closing sessions were held on Monday morning. Daria Miskiv and her New Jersey District convention committee were congratulated for a job well done. Elected as officers for 2018 were President Marge Kovach, Vice President Allison Steffaro, Recording Secretary Matushka Danielle Ilchuk and Treasurer Michael Bowan. Father Boback remains National Spiritual Advisor and Becky Tesar continues as Immediate Past President. In closing, delegates and friends formed a large circle, recited the FOCA’s motto—“Pray, Study, Toil, Be Temperate”—and sang “Faith of Our Fathers,” the FOCA anthem.

During the convention, youth enjoyed a special program focusing on “gratitude and giving,” conducted by Father Benjamin Tucci and Rebecca Kozak. The program included an inspiring session with Archbishop Michael, a [rainy] outing to Hersheypark, and a visit to the Turkey Hill Experience. They also assembled “back to school” kits for needy students.

The 2018 FOCA Convention will be held at the Union Station Hotel in Saint Louis, MO, July 20-23, in conjunction with the 19th All-American Council July 23-27. Online updates will be available prior to the events.

The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America, founded in 1927, is an official organization of the Orthodox Church in America. Detailed information, including how to join, may be found at www.orthodoxfellowship.org. Visit the convention gallery on the OCA web site and Facebook page for an assortment of photographs.
As orientation for incoming and returning students came to an end on Friday, September 1, three second-year St. Tikhon’s seminarians made their way to the Harrisburg/Hershey Sheraton Hotel for the 91st Annual Convention of the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA). Accompanied by His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, Seminary Rector, from Friday evening until Monday morning, Alexander Norton, Student Government Vice President, Bob West, Secretary, and FOCA Representative Isaac Lampart (FOCA Chapter 121), enjoyed three days of prayer, fellowship, and plenary sessions surrounded by friends familiar and new.

The Convention commenced on Friday evening with a reception. After the reception Alexander, Bob, and Isaac helped Deacon Peter Ilchuk construct the portable iconostasis for the weekend’s services, which had been stored at the seminary.

The next day, FOCA’s National Spiritual Advisor, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, encouraged those gathered to take a deep look at the underlying questions facing us today as Orthodox Christians, and how FOCA may respond and contribute as an organization with a history and a heritage. Archbishop Michael followed His Beatitude by offering a heartfelt talk on married student housing, thanking FOCA for all of their generous work over the years to move this project, and described with great love the faithful student families of St. Tikhon’s Seminary, and their children, whom FOCA would assist in housing. According to His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon: “We are closer to the end goal than we have been.”

On Saturday evening, seminarians were happy to reconnect with St. Tikhon’s Alumnus, Father Steven Vernak (STOTS 2007) and the parishioners of Christ the Savior Orthodox Church in Harrisburg, PA, who visited the hotel for Great Vespers. Afterwards, alongside Archbishop Michael and Bishop David of Alaska, Alexander, Bob, and Isaac enjoyed the Euro-Slavic music and dance performance by Duquesne University’s “Tamburitzans.” On Sunday morning, a Hierarchical Liturgy was officiated by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, followed by an evening dinner banquet and dance.

“Whenever we represent our seminary, whether at the Century Association or on Mission Choir trips, I always return to South Canaan with a full heart,” remarked FOCA Representative Isaac Lampart. “All the prayerful generosity which FOCA has offered to this school and its students over the years, and continues to offer, was made personally manifest by the joy with which we were greeted by FOCA at the conference this weekend. I believe I speak for all of us when I say we are humbly inspired by FOCA’s generosity to St. Tikhon’s future leaders of the Church. We are grateful! We hope that our seminary’s relationship with FOCA might deepen as the years go on, both for those currently enrolled here, and for alumni who have already graduated, now serving in their own parishes.”

Story by Seminarian Isaac Lampart, photos by Seminarian Robert West from STS News.
Hershey, “The Sweetest Place On Earth!”

While I’m certain that there isn’t a person in this room who doesn’t recognize those sparkling nuggets hanging in the center of your table, I wonder if you realize what the FOCA has in common with those “KISSES!”

• You might think I am referring to the traditional way in which we greet one another;
• Or you may be considering its shape and think that I am referring to its resemblance to the copulas which adorn the tops of many Orthodox Churches;
• Or possibly you are expecting me to draw some type of parallel between the goodness found within each.

All good guesses however the commonality we have with those sparkling pieces is the legacy of our founding fathers. We both came from humble beginnings starting here in Pennsylvania, but most importantly we both established a legacy of making things better for our people with a deep devotion to funding educational, cultural, and religious opportunities for others.

Milton S. Hershey, the founder of HERSHEY’S KISSES, became a wealthy man and possessed a deep sense of moral responsibility and benevolence. He established foundations to continue programs to carry on his legacy. The founding fathers of this Fellowship certainly didn’t have the independent wealth of Mr. Hershey but they realized the collective strength an organization holds and that together, we could accomplish so much more than any one of them could do alone.

One of the questions most frequently posed to members of our organization is, “Why should I join? Why should I stay? What’s in it for me?” Members of the executive board and board of trustees are asked these questions. Our chapter presidents are asked, we may even ask the question ourselves. When you return to your church, when you meet for your district convention, when you speak to former members or potential new members and hear this question, I want you to relay this story:

At the 2017 National FOCA Convention in Hershey, Pennsylvania, we learned about an Orthodox church and an Orthodox Mission parish in Ohio that were vandalized. The church suffered exterior damage while the mission suffered a fire and lost numerous liturgical items. Within the course of two hours, the convention body of the FOCA used a floor drive to raise over $1,300, made contact with a clergy member of the FOCA who is good friends with the priest at the mission parish and will shortly have a list of items that they lost. That list will be shared with a network of over 50 FOCA affiliated parishes with the request that they locate and donate any needed liturgical items that may be sitting unused. The FOCA will help match parish donations with the needs of the vandalized mission parish and help them get back to holding services as quickly as possible.

When you finish the story, pose this question: could you or any one single member have accomplished this individually? The answer is, of course not. This is why we join, this is why we stay, and this is why we persevere. Not because there’s something in it for me, but because together we can make a difference. Together we have a network. Individually, we can accomplish a little. Together, we can accomplish so much more. We can raise $300,000 for married student housing. We can raise over $20,000 for the Diocese of Alaska. We can purchase a van for St. Herman’s Seminary. We can bring Orthodox youth together for fun and fellowship. We can award college scholarships. We can do so much because we are better together!
Over the recent Labor Day weekend of September 1-4, 2017, the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America (FOCA) held its 91st national convention at the Sheraton Hotel between Hershey and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania — it was sponsored by the New Jersey District under the chairmanship of Daria Miskiv, its governor. Three hierarchs of the Orthodox Church in America participated: His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, primate and the FOCA's spiritual leader; His Eminence, Archbishop Michael of New York and New Jersey; and His Grace, Bishop David of Sitka and Alaska. President Marge Kovach presided over the sessions. A “youth council” sponsored jointly by the FOCA and OCA took place under the guidance of Father Benjamin Tucci, junior/youth department chair, and Rebecca Kozak of the convention committee.

The convention program book featured several messages and a dedication. Metropolitan Tikhon wrote in part: “You have gathered to celebrate your friendships, and to keep in remembrance those who diligently labored and worked to grow and maintain your fellowship for more than 90 years. In your gathering you have the opportunity to determine, with the help of those 90 years of experience and tradition, the ways and means to promote the religious, educational, moral, social and athletic activities of the faithful of the Orthodox Church, and to instill in each member a sense of stewardship to the Orthodox Church. We are grateful that the work of the FOCA continues to bring generations of Orthodox Christians together, and we hope that during this convention fresh and practical ideas will be found to inspire genuine Christian zeal in all our faithful (Rom. 10:2).” Archbishop Mark (Maymon) of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania — who was not present — welcomed the convention to the diocese: “Thank you for your dedication and ongoing service to the Church and the various ministries you support, especially for the youth of the Church.”

Extending his greetings, Archbishop Michael wrote in part as follows: “For the past nine decades, the FROC-FOCA has been at the forefront in supporting the sacred work of the Church in such areas as youth ministry and religious education, athletic events and camping programs, social and cultural activities, and funding of scholarships for college students and seminarians. This commitment to Christ and His people, especially our youth, has indeed been admirable, and it must continue for many years to come, as these needs in Holy Orthodoxy in America are so ever more vital amidst a culture that would minimize Christ and the Church. This year’s Convention cannot simply be a time to exult in the past; it must beckon us to look forward and heavenward. In the days ahead, new and different challenges must be faced by our Church. The future will be bright for us only if we are willing to devote our time and efforts to bringing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a society that has strayed from His path. Our Lord must be the object of our worship, the theme of our sermons, the pattern of our lives, and the inspiration of our ideals. Others must experience His presence when they visit our churches. For this to truly happen, every member of the FOCA and everyone in our parishes must be totally dedicated to serving the Lord and His Holy Church.”

Father Ted Boback stated that “[t]he beginning of our convention coincides with the inauguration of the new ecclesiastical year which is 1 September. The new beginnings offer us an opportunity to reflect on the prior year, to review lessons learned, to revive or renew our programs and to strengthen our chapters, districts, and organization. We celebrate and rejoice in all the work which was accomplished by our organization and by its members during its 91 years of history. Within this decade of our organization, we will observe its existence with a centennial celebration. Father Vladimir Prislopsky, with others, set the foundation and initial azimuth of our fellowship. Today, we remain an integral organization with the Orthodox Church. Let us continue to rededicate ourselves to the ideals established at the founding of our organization and proclaimed by our motto and strive to work in unity of spirit in order to accomplish the tasks before us.” As national president, Marge Kovach authored these words: “It is my privilege, as the 43rd National President of the FOCA, to welcome each of you to a Sweet Scene in ’17, the 91st National FOCA Convention in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The New Jersey District has organized an outstanding weekend of events including an expanded program for youth made possible through the combined efforts of the FOCA and the OCA. I would like to personally thank you for your dedication throughout the past year, specifically, for making it a priority to be here this weekend as we convene for discussion, fellowship, and worship. It is my sincere hope that you experience a sweet weekend filled with plenty of opportunities to connect with old friends and make some new ones. I pray that the Holy Spirit guides our deliberations so they may be fruitful and that God continues to bless the members of the FOCA as we work ceaselessly to proclaim, share, and reveal our Orthodox Christian Faith through service, fellowship, and example.” And Daria Miskiv added her personal welcome: “On behalf of the Convention Committee and the NJ District, it is my pleasure to welcome you, both FOCA members and friends, to the 91st National FOCA Convention. As I mentioned in Chicago last year, NJ has sponsored many conventions in the past and most of them outside of New Jersey. So this year was not being different, the Hershey, Pennsylvania area was chosen and hopefully you are pleased with what we put together. Your hosts hope your experience here adds to your memories of past conventions that we all keep and remember from time to time. Sweet . . . FROC/FOCA memories.”

The program book itself was dedicated to
the founders of the Fellowship’s New Jersey District: “Over the years, the New Jersey District became one of the largest and most active Districts within the organization. The District itself and Chapters within the district sponsored numerous National Conventions including the 50th Annual celebration at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City in 1976. Additionally, New Jersey sponsored many National sporting events and had eight of its distinguished members serve as National Presidents, plus the current leadership position held by Marge Kovach. The success of the New Jersey District can be traced to the individuals who, in 1951, had the vision and talent to establish New Jersey as a separate and distinct district. At its first convention, the New Jersey District elected Daniel Kostovich from Bayonne as its first Governor. He and the other founders laid the groundwork for the growth and success that the New Jersey District achieved. For that, the New Jersey District is indebted to the Founders of the District in 1951 and herein dedicate this program book to their appreciated efforts.”

Friday, September 1st: Church New Year

Friday morning featured the “President’s Open” as golfers enjoyed a round at the nearby Dauphin Highlands golf course with Mark Marton as host. The national board of trustees held its pre-convention meeting that afternoon. The festivities opened on Friday evening with “Hersheyland,” a mouth-watering life-size version of the Candy Land game with eight imaginatively-decorated gingerbread men moving across the game board as conventioneers had the opportunity to mingle and get re-acquainted and enjoy a variety of desserts and candies. The entire display was extremely creative and well-done with giant Hershey kisses, lollipops, Peppermint patties and more. Ken Baron ably handled duties as game-show host and FOCA/FROC trivia was played in between rounds. The Central Pennsylvania District’s entry was named best by the judges; and Grisha Ressetar was closest to guessing the number of chocolate kisses in the big glass container. Rebecca Kozak and her crew did an awesome job!

Saturday, September 2nd

On Saturday morning, the traditional procession opened the convention sessions with Stephen Wasilewski of the Bayonne Alpha “R” Club holding the American flag and your Editor bearing the icon of St. Andrew the First-Called, our patron saint, followed by the hierarchs, national board of trustees and past national presidents. Metropolitan Tikhon conducted the prayer service as the assembly sang the responses under the direction of Basil Kozak, the convention choir director; Deacon Peter Ilchuk, the new convention planning director, assisted. Then Archbishop Theodore Boback, the national spiritual advisor, served the memorial service at which were remembered those members who had reposed since last year’s convention, including Andrew Cverko, past national president (23rd), and Protodeacon Gregory Hatrak, past Anthracite District governor. And the “Star Spangled Banner” and Fellowship anthem were sung.

National President Marge Kovach then called the convention to order and Tammy Schultz, national recording secretary, called roll. Daria Miskiv welcomed all to the Hershey area and expressed the desire that we have a productive and enjoyable Labor Day weekend. She added: “I hope you all enjoyed the Hersheyland last night. It was fun and filled with fellowship. Thanks to my convention committee and also to Deacon Peter Ilchuk on his 1st national convention as CP&O director!” President Kovach appointed Dr. John Schultz, past national president, as parliamentarian; Walter Alesevich, Colonial District governor, as credentials chair; and Laura Johnson as nominating committee chair. The following past national presidents were recognized by Marge: Joseph Baldowski, Michael Herzak, Carol Deerson, Dr. Schultz and Michael Steffaro. (Two others would arrive later on the convention floor and be recognized: Dr. Robert Weger and John Kruchok). Past national spiritual advisors Father Daniel Ressetar and Father William Evansky were also introduced. A full delegation from St. Tikhon’s Seminary chapter #121 participated in the convention with seminarians Andrew Norton, student government vice president, Bob West, secretary, and Isaac Lampart, FOCA representative. (See related story in this issue).

Father Boback gave a detailed national spiritual advisor’s report. He reported on a phone conversation he had with Mother Christophora, the abbess of the Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City, PA in which he suggested that their new guest house, currently under construction, be the recipient of next year’s “Gifts of Love” project. However, Mother Christophora suggested that we consider a more “needy” recipient. So Father Ted moved that we assist the victims of the recent Hurricane Harvey in Texas and Louisiana through International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) as the 2018 “Gifts of Love” project. The assembly unanimously approved this motion. President Kovach reviewed her report and commented on the excellent relationship between the Orthodox Church in America and the Fellowship. In the past year both she and Father Ted had reported to the OCA Metropolitan Council and had a meeting at the chancery. She was grateful that His Beatitude and two other members of the Holy Synod would be participating in our convention this weekend, and said that most of her recommendations would be considered later. Treasurer Michael Bowan reported on FOCA finances and thanked everyone for their prayers, cards and good wishes during his illness last year: “I missed being with you all in Chicago.” However, he is on the mend and will be able to continue serving as treasurer for (at least) one more year.

President Kovach then made a formal presentation of this year’s “Gifts of Love” to Bishop David and Mrs. Dorothy Gray of Kenai, Alaska in the form of a ceremonial check in the amount of $12,500 for the restoration of the historic St. Nicholas Chapel. Dorothy, who is manager of the gift shop at Holy Assumption Church in Kenai and active in Russian-Alaskan restoration projects, thanked the Fellowship members for this generous gift and stated that it would enable them to seek matching funds through local and state associations. Bishop David, too, added his thanks and said that he was overwhelmed by the love and support that the FOCA has shown for the Alaskan Orthodox through the years, including the Yupik coloring books funded last year.

Melissa Tesar, Ohio District governor, reported on the national junior olympics at St. Vladimir’s Camp in July. Participating clergy were Fathers Nicholas Wysultsky, John Baker and Alexander Koranda. Bishop Paul of Chicago celebrated the divine liturgy during camp and awarded gramotas to Deacon
Daniel and Matushka Catrina Kovalak for their years of service as co-directors. She also noted that “Uncle” Andrew “Andy” Cvercko passed away while the Olympics were ongoing, fittingly enough as he was a longtime director of the original Ohio District camp founded over 50 years ago. Memory eternal! And Melissa started a floor drive to raise funds for two Ohio churches which were vandalized by arson in late August: St. Nicholas Church (OCA Romanian) and St. Nikolai Mission (OCA Bulgarian), both in Stark County. Seminarian Lampart stated that Father Mikel Hill, the pastor of the mission, visited St. Tikhon’s Seminary this week and spoke to the seminarians about the vandalism: “Please keep him and his family in your prayers.”

In other business, Danielle Kovach reported that three entries, all from Campbell, OH, were received in this year’s “Celebration of Faith” arts contest with the topic of “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29).” Many years was sung to your Editor for his 15 years of service with this Journal. VP Allison Steffaro reviewed the seminarian assistance program which she has spearheaded for over 15 years. “We continue to provide St. Nicholas Day gifts to the children of our married seminarians, we have parishes and chapters ‘adopt’ seminarian families during the school year, and over $1,000 in gift cards was sent to St. Herman’s Seminary in Alaska last year. Thank you for supporting this project – they are your future priests and families. If anyone would like to help, let me know.”

Archbishop Michael, as rector of St. Tikhon’s Seminary (with Michael Herzak, chairman of the seminary’s board of trustees in attendance), next provided an update on the married student housing project for which the FOCA raised $300,000 in a gift given in 2015. As noted in the oca.org story, the intended building is not suitable and so plans are being made to renovate the former orphanage into a series of apartments – floor plans were distributed. This year we have 18 new students, the largest number in years; 17 of them are married and the single student is female. We have 44 children at the seminary. One couple has adopted “special needs” children whom no one else wants. Catherine is one of their girls who has had radiation for cancer her entire life – she still can’t walk. “Our job is to provide them with housing while they are studying at the seminary.” The archbishop again thanked the Fellowship for what was the largest gift in its history: “No one wants to see this project realized more than us. I hope that it will be finished next year.” Three seminarians are here this weekend and brought with them the iconostasis for the chapel. “Yours is the greatest gift numerically but there is no way to measure what that means humanly. The FOCA is Santa Claus to the kids at the seminary. Thank you again!”

Metropolitan Tikhon then addressed the assembly, stating that he was pleased to be with the FOCA at its annual convention again. He announced that he was issuing an updated letter as OCA primate and the Fellowship’s spiritual leader expressly endorsing the FOCA for its good works over the decades and encouraging parishes and individuals to participate in its worthy activities and programs (see back cover). As reported in the oca.org story, His Beatitude pointed to the expanded collaboration between the two (OCA and FOCA) and the presence of three hierarchs again at the convention, and thanked the Fellowship for its many gifts, especially those involving Alaska and married student housing “It is important for you to really take a deep look at the underlying questions that face us as a Fellowship and as the Orthodox Church in general.” In 2020, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the canonization of America’s first saint, Herman of Alaska. Perhaps the FOCA could help with this celebration, he suggested. “The Gifts of Love project is great work but the Church needs help in other areas as well, including in the Diocese of Mexico.” And the metropolitan stated that he had just received word from the OCA general counsel that the Court had approved the transfer of the property at St. Tikhon’s which will enable the orphanage/student housing project to move forward.

Speaking again, Archbishop Michael said that one of the draws of Father Prislopsky and the other founders of the FROC was to bring young people together to get married: “We have three single seminarians here this weekend. So do your job!” Linda Livosky, Campbell “O” Club, who is never at a loss for words, volunteered to be the official matchmaker! And President Marge added: “I always point out the many marriages of the FOCA but I don’t guarantee them!”

Bishop David next addressed the convention body, deciding not to deliver his prepared remarks (which are included separately in this issue), and once more thanking the Fellowship for last year’s Yupik coloring books which he also hopes to distribute to the Yupik Moravian children whom we pray will return to Orthodoxy. He repeated his profound gratitude for supporting the restoration of the St. Nicholas Chapel in Kenai with this year’s gift of $12,500. His Grace stated that when the New Jersey District’s Alaska cruise (benefitting the “Gifts of Love” project) docked in Sitka, he tried to fly from Anchorage to meet the ship and greet everyone but poor weather prevented him from landing. “So help me get our own plane!” Our students at St. Herman’s Seminary, who leave everything behind to study, are fortunate because they have married student housing. “I had to leave my family in order to study at St. Tikhon’s Seminary because there was no housing for those with small children.” As episcopal head of the OCA youth and young adults department, Bishop David expressed the hope that the FOCA would help lead its important work.

Sem. Lampart noted that much has been discussed about young adults. “I am in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and we had an OCF retreat in Taylor, PA [site of the miracle-working icon] and about 60 to 70 young adults attended last year. We stayed there all night and the ages ranged from 17 to 25. “I urge you to help out the OCF which has been very fundamental for me and my friends.” Mrs. Kovach responded that she agreed it was important to keep our students involved in the OCF in order to keep them connected to the Church while away at school. And Jennifer Pishko presented the preliminary nominations for officers.

Dr. John Schultz then led a wide-ranging open discussion on strategic growth and membership. IPP Becky Tesar stated that we have to ask: why was the FROC started in the first place? The answer: Father Vladimir Prislopsky saw the need to get Orthodox young adults together – it’s that simple. Your Editor noted that in the early years, existing parish organizations such as choir clubs, sporting groups, etc. joined the FROC – new chapters weren’t necessarily established. “Perhaps we should consider inviting organizations already existing in parishes, such as men’s clubs, youth groups, etc., to join the Fellowship – they won’t have to establish a chapter per se.” Allison Steffaro said that the South River parish
has “campers” who are not part of the “R” Club but we try to incorporate them by focusing on service projects — this is based on our Faith and recognition that we are here for fellowship and service. “Realize the young people you already have in your parish or area and involve them in FOCA activities even if they are not formal members.” President Kovach agreed that there is no lack of opportunity but we still need to rethink our own organizational structure — there are people who don’t want to deal with chapter dues and meetings. “We have to have a network to develop plans as a group.”

Metropolitan Tikhon asked for a show of hands: “Is this the highlight of your year?” He was recently at a Baltimore hotel that was hosting Broonycon, a “My Little Pony” conference where people from all over the country gathered to celebrate their passion. “We must have a passion to get together, an inspiring reason to have the meeting. We have a wonderful treasury in our Church and must share it with others.” Continue to “tell our story” as Archbishop Michael has always reminded us. For his part, Vladyka Michael observed that there are about 100 people in this room but only about 10 percent are under the age 25. Basketball gets kids to attend as do the camps. You must connect with youth ministries. How do you translate your successes with the youth into FOCA growth, he asked. Bishop David noted that in Alaska, distance is a big hurdle — we often use Skype or similar methods to communicate. What appeals to the youth? Sports is good but it’s not for everyone; we must listen to the youth — what do they want? We need to work together in a challenging environment.

“Lead by example for the youth,” Melissa Tesar urged. We need to show them that we have an invested interest in them. Come to Cleveland next year for the basketball tournament to support the kids, even if you don’t have any to bring or, better yet, bring some kids to play. She also said that this year, the Ohio camp featured Facebook Live. John Kruchok said that it was important for us to promote the FOCA at the All-American Council in St. Louis next year. Metropolitan Tikhon: “I challenge you to come up with things you’ve done well and expand upon them — invite other dioceses, all-star teams from other areas — have a series of tournaments with the finals in St. Louis next summer.” The preconciliar commission will entertain new ideas and help you accomplish these things. Dr. Schultz stated that each diocese showed a video at the last AAC in Atlanta — “let’s make sure we have a video to show in St. Louis.” The opening plenary session adjourned at 12:34 p.m.

After choir rehearsal, Great Vespers was celebrated in the chapel as reported in the oca.org story and that evening’s entertainment featured the famed “Tamburitzans” from Pittsburgh.

Sunday, September 3rd
General confessional prayers were led in the chapel by Fathers Boback and Evansky; Reader Michael Kupec read the hours. The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy was concelebrated in the chapel by Metropolitan Tikhon, Archbishop Michael and Bishop David assisted by Archpriests Theodore Boback, William Evansky, Daniel Ressetar, Priest Benjamin Tucci, Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak and Deacon Peter Ilchuk as well as several subdeacons and altar servers, including Roman Ostash, Stephen Wasilewski, Andrew Romanov, Bob West, Alex Nescott and Brian Dubos. Mr. Kozak, who directed the mixed choir, was awarded a primatial gramota at the end of liturgy by His Beatitude for his many years as the convention choir director.

Bishop David preached on the parable of the wicked husbandmen and the vineyard, emphasizing that everything is a gift from God. He noted that the Yupik peoples in Alaska, when they start hunting, have a tradition that the first animal, fish or bird that is caught is not yours but must be given away. Usually it is given to one’s namesake (sort of an adopted uncle) and if that namesake has passed away, then it is given to his widow with the words: “John (the deceased) gives this to you.” You in the FOCA have given back to God for the blessings you have received. Every time we hold gifts back we are the husbandmen. God doesn’t want this — give it back to Him! His Grace told an interesting story of the Alaska Natives who sued the U.S. Government in the 1970’s for damages and were awarded millions. Twenty-one corporations were formed — some spent it all, others invested well. One corporation’s investments didn’t work out. When an earthquake destroyed their village, the first thing they did was build a new church in the late 1980’s. Well, this investment paid off. For today that corporation is the richest in all Alaska and the church has the finest furnishings and liturgical articles from Russia! See what God can do: they put their trust in God and not in themselves, and God blessed them. “Put all of your heart, all of your faith, all of your ability in Him. We all remember the glory days of the FOCA but you have a future to discuss. Work for God and He will bless you!” Amen.”

In the afternoon, the winners of the Chinese auction were announced. The Central Pennsylvania District, under Gov. Gary Lelo, even held its convention. The evening featured the “Fantastic Fare and Sweet Sounds” banquet and dance with the ever gracious Allison Steffaro, vice president, serving as toastmistress and introduced by Ms. Miskiv. Archbishop Michael, substituting for Metropolitan Tikhon (who had to leave early), read the new primatial letter (the text of which is on the back cover) then delivered his own remarks. He first thanked the New Jersey District and convention committee: “I am so proud of Daria and her crew. In the past I’ve urged you to ‘tell your story.’ For next year’s All-American Council, I think you should make a video and interview people who can tell that story — the venerable Father Dan, Margie Cimbolic or the 4 princesses! Let them tell you why they are here and pull at the heart stops of the people of Faith.” As a person who believes in the future of our Church, I want to thank Father Benjamin and Rebecca Kozak for the youth council this weekend, an incredible program. The Church never changes its Faith, but we need changes to the practical application of the Faith. The Apostles tried to convert the Jewish people and finally went to the Gentiles. The original language of the Church was Greek, but as the Church spread other languages, such as Slavonic, were introduced. “I tell my Catholic friends, we’ll let you use Latin!” The early Christians confessed their sins publicly but this was changed to private confessions to protect the members; the early Church had married bishops, but this proved to be too difficult so bishops then came only from the ranks of the monastics for practical reasons.

Hi Grace went on to say: “The Church has never changed the Faith but makes pastoral changes. I don’t have an answer to what will work best for you, the FOCA. But everyone should consider what changes will work best for the
young people, whether its changing the date of the convention, combining it with the basketball tournament or having a ‘family reunion’ type gathering. I don’t know.” “I’ve told you in the past to ‘tell the story’ but I’m not sure that advice has worked that well. I would ask the FOCA to make a video and show it at the AAC, put it on the OCA website, on diocesan websites, go to parishes and put it on Youtube. Do this not from pride but because you are doing the work of Christ the Lord, His Church, His Gospel. Invite people to join you and show them what you’ve done. “I believe in FOCA and in all of you, and we will not be disappointed by the Lord. I urge you to explore and make that video of what you’ve been doing for the past 91 years!”

President Kovach next delivered her message (which is published in its entirety in this issue) and cited specific acts of generosity, emphasizing that “this is why we join, this is why we stay, this is why we persevere – not because there is something in it for me, but because together we can make a difference.” She then awarded four $1,000 college/university scholarships (the awardees are profiled in this issue). After the banquet, modern and folk dancing continued well into the night.

Monday, September 4th: Labor Day

The final sessions were held Monday morning. Father Boback led the opening prayer with Bishop David in attendance. Daria Miskiv and her New Jersey District convention committee were congratulated on a job well done. Bids for the 2020 national convention were awarded to Minneapolis St. Mary’s, #94 (July 24-27) and to several chapters for sporting events. Carol Deerson, as chair, promoted next year’s convention in St. Louis (July 20-23) with the AAC at the Union Station Hotel. National junior olympics will be held July 8-14, 2018. Linda Livosky invited all to next year’s “Bo-Ling” tourney in Campbell, OH at Boardwalk Lanes – Uncle Bill’s famous Chinese ribs will be served! Sami Exler announced the “My Home” photo contest winners.

Under old business, Father Ted moved that we sponsor a music workshop at the AAC, which led to an extended discussion. Justin Nescott, #1, stated that this was an excellent opportunity for the FOCA to promote itself to others at the council. Sem. Lampart suggested that Benedict Sheehan, St. Tikhon’s music director, would be an excellent choice to lead it. Becky Tesar reported that $3,700 remained from the bequest of the Matsushka Anastasia Karnov estate. Bill Krafkint recalled that the original FROC choir conferences launched his career as a church choir director – he directed for over 34 years and still conducts as a substitute. The motion carried. Donna Tesar announced the stock awards which raised over $2,500 for scholarships and youth ministry – Mary Jane Lucak of Cleveland, #4/6, won the $300 first prize!

In new business, Father Ted suggested that the FOCA hold a “youth rally” together with the OCA youth department. Wally Bacisk of Singac inquired whether this would be a CEOYLA type event or more like a Pope youth event? Ed Korolenko, Florida chapter at large, stated that we could have a youth rally-sports event with other jurisdictions. The motion was approved with no specifics. President Kovach reviewed her recommendations which were acted upon. Bishop David: “We were so taken by the contribution to the St. Nicholas Chapel project. The grant goes to the sacred trusts which restore Alaskan historical properties. Dorothy Gray and I would like to offer honorary membership to the national FOCA president to the Russian Sacred Arts Council of Alaska!” He also invited the FOCA to give a presentation at the Alaskan diocesan conference this fall.

Mr. Korolenko complimented the banquet speech of Archbishop Michael and asked what will the board do to prepare a video for the AAC as he suggested? Your Editor noted that Greg Ressetar had prepared a promotional video several years ago but it was never released; perhaps this could be used as a starting point. President Kovach responded that the board will certainly see that such a video is done for the council. Larry Skvir of St. Stephen’s OCF invited everyone to the 81st Novogodny Ball in the Philadelphia area. Carol Deerson stated that Marge’s banquet speech was “great” and “hit all the rights points: These are things that we can do now!” Marge in turn thanked Becky Tesar for her help – the speech was shown on Facebook Live. Michael Snyder of Akron also expressed his compliments. Melissa Tesar announced that $2,000 had been raised for the 2 Ohio churches damaged by arson ($1500 to the mission, $500 to the church!)

Lory Nescott, #1, St. Alexander Nevsky, noted that Metropolitan Tikhon has asked: is this the best 2 hours of your life? That is a challenge to us. The Tamburitza’s concert was an “absolutely wonderful time” but our plenary sessions have become pro forma. She urged that they become more “discussion” and that the routine business be conducted in a different way. Rebecca Kozak reported that the youth enjoyed their weekend activities, including meeting with Archbishop Michael and going to both Hersheypark and the Turkey Hill Experience where they had too much ice cream! A total of 70 “back to school” bags will be distributed to needy students in New Jersey. Marge Kovach thanked her and Father Benjamin. Carol Deerson announced that $2,250 was raised by the New Jersey District Alaska cruise for the “Gifts of Love” project! Next fall they are considering a New England/Canada cruise. Melissa Tesar asked that because the 2018 project is devoted to IOCC Hurricane Harvey relief, we submit our contributions sooner than later. And Treasurer Bowan presented next year’s budget which was approved.

Elected as officers for 2018 are: President Marge Kovach, Vice President Allison Steffaro, Recording Secretary Matsushka Danielle Ilchuk and Treasurer Michael Bowan. Father Ted Boback remains national spiritual advisor and Becky Tesar continues as immediate past president. Tammy Schultz was thanked for her service as secretary. Father Ted led the installation of officers ceremony in the presence of Bishop David and each officer had the chance to render remarks. Father Ressetar read the travel prayer and then Bishop David quoted from a Yupik saying: “This is not the end of things!” The closing ritual concluded the convention as delegates and friends formed a large circle, recited the motto “Pray, Study, Toil, Be Temperate,” squeezed tightly and then sang “Faith of Our Fathers,” the FOCA anthem. And so our 91st national convention entered the history books as some started to sing “Meet Me in St. Louis, Louis!” from the famous musical.
His Grace, Bishop David of Sitka and Alaska

I want to begin my expressing my gratitude on behalf of the Diocese of Sitka and Alaska for the love and support that has been given to us by the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America. As you have heard me way many times, the needs of Alaska are great and the resources are few. The FOCA has made possible not only the furtherance of education of our children through the instructive coloring books in the Yupik language, you have also given us hope in the preservation of an important historic landmark on the Kenai Peninsula in St Nicholas Chapel. That Chapel is a reminder of the good work that was done for the people of the Kenai during an epidemic, its preservation a living landmark of Orthodox contributions to the community.

The role that the FOCA is playing in the present stage that is Orthodox America cannot be overstated. Just by observing any dimension of our society, one can see the absence of strong moral leadership. At every turn we find forceful and emotional mindsets unwilling to even consider the views of the other side. Far from seeking fellowship, these crusaders of the extreme seek only their own dominance on the stage of public opinion. While the world seeks out leaders of order and harmony, the voices of the few on the fringes continue to dominate and inflict chaos wherever they can.

The world is again looking for that shining light upon the hill that will show the way to a life of clarity and strong moral direction. The FOCA has always been that kind of light, not only to Orthodox Christians, but to the communities in which they live. A look at the Mission of the FOCA shows us how they accomplish this leadership. By engaging in the tenets of our Orthodox Faith, they show the way of right living known in no other faith body. By supporting and encouraging our youth, they guarantee the moral quality of generations yet to come. In supporting the missionary growth of our church, the FOCA multiplies the opportunities for the light of Faith to shine in more places in our Land. By using practical means to create lasting friendships at local and national levels, the FOCA increases the lasting bonds of both Faith and brotherhood and sisterhood in communities all over. In providing educational, cultural, social and athletic activities, those bonds of friendship are given an added layer of significance by virtue of their enduring memories they create among the participants.

I have saved discussion of one of the points of their mission for the last. That is encouraging and promoting unity among all Orthodox jurisdictions. May I say that of all the work the FOCA, this is perhaps the most meaningful in its need for action. As I mentioned earlier, the chaotic society we engage daily needs a source for leadership and fellowship. Who has more tools to that end than the FOCA? All of the tenets I previously mentioned are more than adequate to the task, when employed correctly. To do this will require more than rhetoric or fun activities. It will require the effort of each and every member doing their part in participation within the communities where they live.

The fact of the matter is that we will not survive another generation of Orthodox Christians indifferent to the very reason we exist as Orthodox Christians. In times past, the early days of what was then known as the FROC brought Orthodox men and women together all over the Northeast to engage in fellowship and worship and to show none of us were alone. In strong numbers there was strong faith. What brought these people together was a common faith in Orthodoxo and in their ethnic roots of Russian Heritage. Many of those here today can tell a story of how they met their spouse through gatherings of the FROC. We all like to say, "Those were the days", as if we have lost something in time as we move away from those days of glory past.

But we do not have to accept demise as the product of time, unless we want to. We can simply sit around enjoying our memories as we drift off into that great good night that awaits us all, or we can reexamine why we still exist. I would submit to you that the very reason we can gather here in Hershey this week is exactly because we are willing to ask that question. And we are willing to ask that question because we have a God who desires us to continue, to not give up the fight, to not give the battle to the iniquitous but to ask God, "What is next?"

May I remind you of a survey question you asked your members in 2011? Back then, "approximately 41% of respondents replied “unsure” when asked “How do you see the FOCA as a viable organization in the next 10 years?” So I ask you, what are you “unsure” of? Is it the fear of loss of ethnic identity? Today converts make up a larger and continually growing percentage of our membership as a church. Is it the fear of making financial commitments? Remember the words of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Is it the fear of change? While it is true that God is the same, yesterday, today and forever, it is also true that you do not put new wine into old wineskins. We Orthodox are very slow to accept change of any kind. We are genuinely suspicious of change and never permit change simply for change’s sake. So perhaps we are “unsure” because we do not understand what change would look like. So it is not entirely easy to think about a “new” FOCA, when we aren’t sure what that “new” is going to be.

So now I come back to my original question, “What’s next?” Let us ask what we now know, and what we view or perceive as our institutional memory. The very fact that you have changed the name of this organization reflects the idea of change and seeking to improve the scope of membership. We all admit that we live in a world that is vastly different from the one most of us grew up in. In nearly every area of endeavor, we no longer do things the way we did fifty years ago. Bookkeeping used to be done in ledgers, now we have electronic spreadsheets. The field of health care as grown by leaps and bounds with medicines and procedures that did not exist even ten years ago. What used to be a week or more stay in the hospital may now be done as an outpatient procedure. Even the way we gain information has moved away from print media to online journals and websites. It is a fact that everyone under the age of thirty does not subscribe to even one newspaper or magazine.

What is next? Opportunity to improve ourselves. Remember the old story of the monk who was asked what do you do in the monastery? He said, “We fall, and we get back up. We fall again and we get back up again.” With this example we begin to see the FOCA as a viable organization in the next 10 years?” So I ask you, what are you “unsure” of? Is it the fear of loss of ethnic identity? Today converts make up a larger and continually growing percentage of our membership as a church. Is it the fear of making financial commitments? Remember the words of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Is it the fear of change? While it is true that God is the same, yesterday, today and forever, it is also true that you do not put new wine into old wineskins. We Orthodox are very slow to accept change of any kind. We are genuinely suspicious of change and never permit change simply for change’s sake. So perhaps we are “unsure” because we do not understand what change would look like. So it is not entirely easy to think about a “new” FOCA, when we aren’t sure what that “new” is going to be.

So I urge you all to use the tools you have kept sacred all these ninety-plus years to that end, Pray — every day, for God to make your efforts fruitful. Study — what has been successful and what has failed and learn from them. Toil — give earnest effort to what is needed. And finally, be temperate — do not put all your desires into one idea or action, do not be over passionate about one thing while ignoring others, or becoming impatient when you do not see immediate results.

In closing I want to again state my gratitude for all you have done for the Diocese of Alaska. We shall do our utmost to use these resources wisely and to a fruitful end. May God continue to bless the work of the FOCA and grant you all many years of health, wealth, and happiness.

Orthodox Christian JOURNAL • Summer 2017 17
Winners of the 2017 Photo Contest Announced

At the recent 91st national FOCA convention in Hershey, Pennsylvania over the Labor Day weekend, Samantha “Sami” Exler announced the winners of this year’s contest with the theme “My Home.” Elexis Schultz was the winner in the 18-45 year age category with her nighttime scene of downtown Columbus, Ohio. She’s a member of the Cap City “O” Club in Columbus. And Robert Butchko won the 46-plus year age category with his Missouri farm scene. He’s a member of the Madison, Illinois chapter, #171, just across the river from St. Louis. Congratulations to both winners and thanks to all who entered the 2017 photo contest!

Protopresbyter Daniel & Matushka Evdokia (Dunia) Hubiak
Honored by Metropolitan Tikhon with the Order of St. Innocent, Gold Class

A triple celebration was held at Christ the Savior Orthodox Church in Berlin, MD over the weekend of August 25-27, 2017: the elevation of the community, which started as a mission in 2000, to full parish status, the annual Washington DC Diocesan Day gathering, and the 90th birthday of the parish’s founder, Protopresbyter Daniel Hubiak. His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, presided over the celebration. Family and friends of the Hubiak’s gathered for a dinner in their honor on Friday evening. The Archdiocese of Washington participated in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Saturday morning followed by a festive barbecue and open house. Following liturgy, Metropolitan Tikhon awarded Father Daniel & Matushka Dunia the Order of St. Innocent, gold class, the highest award of the Orthodox Church in America. “His Beatitude conveyed the sincere best wishes and congratulations of the Holy Synod, the Chancery and the faithful of the OCA of which Father Daniel has been a faithful priest for over 60 years, serving in numerous parishes and capacities, most notably as chancellor, treasurer, secretary and head of the OCA Representation Church of St. Catherine in Moscow,” said Priest John Parsells, rector. Deacon Gregory Hubiak, their nephew, also served.

The Hubiak’s daughters are active members of the FOCA: Lory Nescott, together with husband Gregory and their family with Chapter #1, St. Alexander Nevsky Orthodox Cathedral, Allison Park, PA and Matushka Annice Oleynik, together with husband Archpriest Joseph and their family with the Canonsburg “O” Club of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church, Canonsburg, PA. Axios and many years to Father Daniel & Matushka Dunia and their family!

— adapted from oca.org with photos
At the recent 91st national convention banquet, National President Marge Kovach awarded scholarships of $1,000.00 each to four deserving recipients: Hannah Willison, Klimkosky scholarship with Fred Lewis honors for highest overall score, Wade Hisiro (Klimkosky), Alexis Steffaro and Danielle Jurichko (both Fekula scholarships). They are individually profiled with their photos. Congratulations and good studies to this year's national FOCA scholarship awardees!

**WADE HISIRO:** Wade is a sophomore at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, VA majoring in electrical engineering. He is a member of the Harrisburg "O" Club, #199, Christ the Saviour Church, Harrisburg, PA. At school he is a member of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship and has been elected treasurer. Wade is also a member of the Environmental Science Organization and Green Grounds as well as the prestigious Rodman Scholars, an engineering honors program. He has served as an altar boy since 2001 and on the church softball team since 2011. In high school Wade was treasurer of the junior chapter, played in the 2012 national basketball tournament, was in the church school program, and has volunteered with many charities, including food banks, blood drives, and fundraisers.

**HANNAH WILLISON:** Hannah has been a member of the Campbell Junior "O" Club, #27-J, St. John the Baptist Church, Campbell, OH. She was president, VP and treasurer of her chapter and participated in national and district basketball tourneys, national conventions and church luncheons. In her parish Hannah sings in the church and youth choirs, is a reader and substitute church school teacher, and helps with food drives, school supply drives and seminarian family collections. She played soccer and basketball, and was a member of the Chamber Singers, National Honors Society, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, student council class officer, tennis club and was in the musical. In volunteer work, Hannah went Christmas caroling at nursing homes, worked concession stands, painted classrooms at school and helped at community luncheons. She is a freshman at the Pennsylvania State University in State College, PA and plans to major in industrial engineering.

**DANIELLE JURICHKO:** Danielle, a member of St. Mary's Cathedral and its "O" Club, #94, Minneapolis, MN, is a second-year graduate student in the University of Minnesota's master of landscape architecture program. Her undergraduate degree was in landscape design and planning. In her parish Danielle sings in the church choir, is an assistant Sunday school teacher, a coach for the national basketball tournament team, and assists with the Taste of Northeast Festival. She is chairman of the coffee hour and Orthodox Christian Fellowship liaison and board member. As a junior she was a "Saints" board member, played in national basketball tourneys, and was in Sunday school. Danielle spent a semester abroad in Italy and Turkey studying architecture, is involved in the college of design mentor program and plays intramural sports. Her volunteerism includes the Centro Guadalupano after-school program, parish landscaping and the Camp Bovey construction and building project.

**ALEXIS STEFFARO:** Alexis is the eldest daughter of FOCA Vice President Allison and Michael (past national president) Steffaro and granddaughter of Carol (past national president) and Walter Deerson. She has been an active member of SS. Peter and Paul Church in South River, NJ and its Junior "R" Club, #167-J. In her parish she is a choir member, has assisted in the annual Yolka, helps teach church school, created a teen night service club, helps collect and wrap Christmas gifts for seminarian families, built a prayer garden for her church and sings in the local balalaika orchestra. Alexis was valedictorian of her high school graduating class and student council secretary as well as student rep to the board of education, captain of the girls varsity soccer team, and sings the national anthem at events. Also, she has served as camp counselor/choir director at St. Vladimir's Camp, participates in the national basketball tournaments, helps with caroling and participates in the annual national conventions. Alexis has done much volunteering, including with a coat drive, the local food bank, coach at Buddy Ball (program to teach special education students soccer), and handmade blankets for needy families. Alexis has just started attending Lafayette College in Easton, PA and plans to major in international affairs.

Congratulations to the 2017 FOCA National Scholarship Awardees!
St. John’s Alpha Sponsors the 2017 National Summer Sports Tournament in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

On July 7 and 8, 2017, this year’s national summer sports tournament was held at the Green Pond Country Club in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Sponsored by St. John’s Senior “O” Club, Chapter #212, of Alpha, New Jersey, it was co-chaired by Frank Beruta and Gary Lelo, chapter president and governor of the Central Pennsylvania District. Green Pond Country Club “is a favorite among local golfers. The golf course, designed by Alex Findley, and long known for great greens and its challenging layout, is also home of the annual Lehigh Valley Amateur Tournament.” After golfing on Saturday, a steak dinner was held at the course followed by the awards presented by Anthony Schultz of the FOCA national sports committee. Next year’s tournament will be played in the Cleveland, Ohio area, sponsored by the Cleveland “R” Club, #4/6, with details to be announced. Great job on this year’s tourney Alpha! Fore!

2017 Summer Sports Tournament Results and Photo Gallery

**ONE DAY EVENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Callaway HDCP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Scott Cahayla Passaic, NJ 78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Andy Petty Cincinnati, OH 95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. John Lord Garden St., NJ 77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Greg Cahalya Passaic, NJ 77</td>
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**TWO DAY EVENT 54 and Under**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. David Schenken Canonsburg, PA 159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Anthony Schultz Columbus, OH 84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bob Schenken Canonsburg, PA 196</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Alex Schenken Canonsburg, PA 146</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. John Schultz Weirton, WV 153</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Kevin Rudolph Canonsburg, PA 156</td>
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**TWO DAY EVENT 55 and Over**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Callaway HDCP</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mark Marton Garden St., NJ</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Mark Janiszewski Garden St., NJ 149</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
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Friday

#6 Closest to Pin Scott Cahayla
#15 Closest to Pin Alex Schenken
#17 Closest to Pin Mark Marton

Saturday

#6 Closest to Pin David Schenken
#15 Closest to Pin Andy Petty
#17 Closest to Pin John Schultz
Protodeacon Gregory Hatrak fell asleep in the Lord on the evening of July 1, 2017 at the age of 46. He was director of marketing and operations for St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press and Bookstore in Yonkers, NY. “We are most grieved by Pdn. Gregory’s sudden falling asleep in the Lord,” said Archpriest Chad Hatfield, president of St. Vladimir’s. “This is both a profound personal and professional loss to our school, and we are keeping our beloved Protodeacon, his wife, Matushka Robyn, and his parents and family members in our prayers.”

Born in Minersville, PA, Deacon Greg is the son of Archpriest Michael and Matushka Valeria Hatrak. His love for assisting in the liturgical services began at age three when he started serving in the altar with his father at SS. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Minersville, at which Father Mike served as rector for well over 40 years. He was a member of the Boy Scouts in his youth, played the saxophone in the high school marching band, and was a volunteer firefighter. Deacon Greg went on to attend St. Tikhon’s Seminary and obtained a bachelor of theology degree in a joint program with Marywood University. He worked on the grounds of St. Tikhon’s Monastery and then became manager of St. Tikhon’s Bookstore for nearly 15 years; he also continued his work as a volunteer firefighter in the area.

Deacon Greg married his wife Robyn in 2008 in New York and was ordained to the holy diaconate by Bishop Tikhon in 2010 at his home parish during its 100th anniversary celebration. On May 20, 2017, he was elevated to the rank of protodeacon in recognition of his many years of assisting both Metropolitans Herman and Tikhon and for his dedication in training servers and deacons as well as for his expert service in the altar where he often guided higher-ranking clergy through the necessary liturgical motions. Deacon Greg starting working at St. Vladimir’s Seminary Bookstore as manager in 2010 and because of his ability and expertise, he quickly rose to the position of managing director of both the bookstore and SVS Press. Under his tenure, they underwent tremendous growth and sales reached the $1 million mark for the first time. Deacon Greg kept up a rigorous travel schedule at home and abroad to ensure the visibility of SVS Press products.

He was a member of the Minersville “R” Club and later the St. Tikhon’s Seminary FOCA chapter, and served as the last governor of the Anthracite District, participating in many national FOCA/FROC conventions and other gatherings. In addition to his wife and parents, Deacon Greg is survived by his brother Matthew (Lori) Hatrak and sister Natalie Hatrak. Matushka Robyn is the special events, hospitality and alumni relations officer at St. Vladimir’s Seminary. A panikhida was served at the seminary’s Three Hierarchs Chapel followed by a viewing and funeral services at St. Tikhon’s Monastery Church in South Canaan, PA. The following morning, Metropolitan Tikhon and many other clergy presided at the hierarchal Divine Liturgy at the church with burial following in the monastery cemetery. A mercy meal was then held at St. Michael’s Center in Jermyn. May Protodeacon Gregory’s memory be ever eternal!

– adapted from svots.edu with portrait photo from oca.org

Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church
of Lakewood, Ohio Celebrates Its Centennial

On July 1, 2017, the parish of Saints Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church, Lakewood, Ohio celebrated its first 100 years. His Grace, Bishop Paul of Chicago and the Midwest, was the main celebrant assisted by Archpriest Yves Babich, the rector, and several other clergy. A festive banquet was held in the church hall afterwards. The parish was founded by immigrants from the sub-Carpathian Mountain region of Eastern Europe under Father Joseph Tkach. The cornerstone of the church was blessed by Metropolitan Platon in 1922. In 1928 the Lakewood “R” Club, #13-84, was formed as part of the new FROC; it remains active to this day, making it one of the oldest chapters in the FOCA. The present church was constructed in 1950 on Madison Avenue in Lakewood. The parish participates yearly in the Lakewood Community Festival and Arts Festival. It currently alternates vesperal liturgies for major feast days with the nearby St. Nicholas Ukrainian Orthodox Pro-Cathedral. “May the memories of all the faithful members and pastors of Saints Peter and Paul Church who have gone before us in the hope of the Resurrection be eternal – and may the Lord help us to carry on and cling to their cherished beliefs of Holy Orthodoxy, the True Faith! This is our sacred obligation.” Congratulations to all the faithful of Saints Peter and Paul!

– submitted by Dolly Manzuk
Andrew “Andy” Cvercko, age 95, fell asleep in the Lord on July 3, 2017. He was the 23rd past national president of the FROC/FOCA, having served from 1974-1976. And Andy was the founder of the Ohio District camp in Farmdale, OH, now known as the St. Vladimir Retreat and Camp Center.

Born in Campbell, OH, Andy was a graduate of Youngstown College, the Danna Musical Institute and received his master’s degree at Kent State University. After serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II, he became an instructor of music and chorus at Fowler/Vienna School District and then principal at the district, a member of the Mathews Local School District board and retired superintendent of Mathews Local Schools. He also was president of the Ohio Music Education Association (district five) and a Boy Scout master.

For 56 years, Andy served as choir director at St. Andrew Orthodox Church, Maple Heights, OH in addition to directing choirs in Campbell and Warren, OH. He also directed the Male Chorus of Northeast Ohio. For over 20 years, “Uncle” Andy (as he was affectionately known by the campers) served as director of the FROC camp which he founded and was honored during the 50th anniversary year celebration of the camp in 2014 at St. Michael’s Woodside. He also was instrumental in the FROC choir conferences held in the 1970s/1980s at the camp and elsewhere. He was a member of many other church-related organizations, including the Russian Brotherhood Organization (Lodge 198) and the Eastern Orthodox Men’s Society. Andy and Anne participated in many national conventions, district events, and sporting tournaments, even into his 90’s.

Andy is survived by his wife, Anne (Pecuszok), whom he married in 1967; his children Dave (Lisa) Cvercko, Donya (Todd) Wilson, Dan (Agni) Cvercko, Elaine Lawrence, Janet (Gary) King, June Stewart and Andrew J. (Olga) Cvercko; 16 grandchildren; and 10 great-grandchildren. Funeral services were celebrated at St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in Campbell. May his memory be eternal!

Editor’s note: Special thanks to Andy’s dear friend and fellow camp director, Leon Sheean, for sharing many of these historic photos.
St. Archangel Michael and All the Angels and Bodiless Powers of Heaven: November 8th

God created nine orders of angels. Archangel Michael is the leader of the angels. His name means “Who is like God.” When the devil was thrown out of heaven with his followers, Archangel Michael guarded the gates of heaven with his flaming sword. He also defends the garden of Eden, told Abraham not to sacrifice Isaac, told Lot to flee Sodom, and took the soul of Moses from the devil. His icon often shows him with a flaming sword. We celebrate his feast day and that of all the angels and other bodiless powers of heaven on November 8th.

Color the icon of Archangel Michael and make the sword a “flaming sword” by covering it with some glue and sprinkling it with red glitter from a craft store.
September 3, 2017
09/004

To the Rectors and Pastors of the Orthodox Church in America:
Dear Fathers, Beloved in the Lord,

Since its founding, the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America has been engaged in expanding the mission of Christ’s Church here in North America, and has been a key partner in the evangelistic work of the Orthodox Church in America. By being one of the first organizations to make available Orthodox literature in the English Language; by producing and publishing Sunday School materials, and by training and encouraging a generation of young people in the sacred choral traditions of our Orthodox Church FOCA has established itself as one of the most important fellowships of the Orthodox Church in America.

As the fellowship celebrates over ninety years of service to the Orthodox Church we anticipate the work of FOCA will continue to bear fruit most especially in working with our youth and young adults, and with continued charitable efforts on behalf of our seminaries and mission parishes. The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America has always served, embraced and welcomed all members of the Orthodox Church in America. We invite every member of the Orthodox Church in America to inquire into the good works of the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America so that those works might be multiplied across the entirety of the Orthodox Church in America. By working together, we can more easily continue on our path to expand the mission of Christ and His Church here in North America. We hope you will consider offering your time and talents to the fellowship and become part of the great legacy that is the Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America.

In Christ,

+ Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada