

Parish Elder's Report

As the Covid response wound down from 2020, St. Nicholas Parish used the opportunity to make infrastructure improvements and prepare for the return of normal parish life.

Old Business (Changes Implemented)

The bylaws of the parish have been simplified and brought into compliance with the bylaws of the Orthodox Church in America and the Diocese of the West.

St. Nicholas Parish has been growing, with new members and more participation, despite the necessity of working around Covid requirements. We welcome our newcomers and the faces and conversations we missed over the months of limited meetings and look forward to when we can get back to the active social parish life we had before. We welcome the return of coffee hour and the people who have made it possible.

Because of the Covid restrictions, we implemented streaming liturgies. After working out the kinks in a new technology, we have provided the opportunity to “go to church” for people who might not otherwise have been able to. (It's not a perfect replacement, but it's better than nothing.)

Several church maintenance improvements have made the parish buildings safer and longer lasting:

- A new water heater in the church
- Roof repairs
- Seismic earthquake shutoff valve for the gas lines
- A submetering system (don't ask me to explain it) that should lower our water bills
- Major grounds cleanups, removal of excess brush and fence repairs

Tim Moore has done a detailed safety walkthrough for the parish and found several opportunities to make the church and hall safer, as well as complying with fire marshal regulations. It's not just the law; it's a good idea.

A new parish group formed—a subcommittee of the St. Elizabeth Care Team—called “Caring for the Earth,” which seeks ways to preserve the planet and protect the environment.

The St. Nicholas website got a facelift to make it more responsive to the needs of the parish. A website is always a work in progress, and we welcome your suggestions for changes and improvements. A Donate button has been added to the site, allowing parishioners to give online if they prefer.

The parish e-bulletin is now being processed through MailChimp, an email management program. It’s easier to manage than a list handled from the priest’s computer, gives better security to subscribers, and allows subscribers to manage their email addresses directly.

New Business (What We’re Working On)

Updating the parish directory. When you get the option to have your photo taken and update your contact information, please do. Having a photo directory will help us get to know not just names but faces.

We have more than a century of parish records that in their own way tell the story of St. Nicholas. We want to preserve these records for future generations. Gabriella Anderson, a librarian, has agreed to be a resource for us as we make decisions about what to keep and how. We’ll be looking for people who are willing to scan and organize (both digital and paper files) the records and possibly translate early meeting minutes and other documents from Russian.

The parish council held a planning session for the next three years and arrived at more a process than a plan. We’ve created work groups, volunteers gathering to get things done in different areas of ministry. They don’t take the place of other groups that are currently working, and the groups themselves will decide what they need to do and when, in collaboration with parish clergy. The names on the list at this point are the people who signed up several months ago. If you’re interested in a subject area, please sign up. We’ll take whatever you’re willing and able to give. If someone is not on a list now, it doesn’t say anything about past or future service.

I think I speak for the parish council when I say we’re grateful for all the big and small ways you make St. Nicholas such a wonderful parish.