

St. Basil the Great Orthodox Church

J a n u a r y 2 0 2 5

2 0 5 H i g h l a n d A v e n u e
D e s P e r e s , M O 6 3 1 2 2

A parish of the Diocese of
Chicago and Mid-America of
the Russian Orthodox Church
Outside of Russia

Clergy

Archpriest Sergii Alekseev, Parish Rector
Protopriest Radomir Chkautovich
Priest Thomas Nichols
Deacon Ephraim Galloway



Schedule of Services

• Sunday before Nativity

- Sat., Jan. 4 Vigil 5 P.M.
- Sun., Jan. 5 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.

• Nativity Eve

- Mon., Jan. 6 Royal Hours 9 A.M.

• Nativity of the Lord

- Mon., Jan. 6 Vigil 6 P.M.
- Tue., Jan. 7 Divine Liturgy 9 A.M.

• Sunday after Nativity

- Sat., Jan. 11 Vigil 5 P.M.
- Sun., Jan. 12 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.

• Holy Hierarch Basil the Great

- Circumcision of the Lord
 - Mon., Jan. 13 Vigil 6 P.M.

- Tue., Jan. 14 Divine Liturgy 9 A.M.

• Theophany of the Lord

- Sat., Jan. 18 Vigil 5 P.M.
- Sun., Jan. 19 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.
- Followed by the Greater Blessing of Water

• Sunday after Theophany

- Sat., Jan. 25 Vigil 5 P.M.
- Sun., Jan. 26 Divine Liturgy 10 A.M.

• Equal-to-the-Apostles Nina

- Mon., Jan. 27 Moleben 9 A.M.

Man with No Hands Who Wrote Icons

Information taken from *Russian Beyond* and *Pravoslavie.ru*

My strength is made perfect in weakness

II Cor. 12:9

In the 19th century, it was unenviable to have the fate of a man with a disability from a poor peasant family. That could have also happened to Gregory Zhuravlev, who was born in 1858 in the village of Utyovka in Samara Region with a severe health



condition: the arms of the child were only grown to his elbows, and his legs – to his knees. For a peasant family, where the family's well being depended on everyone's, including children's, input, it was a heavy burden. As the inhabitants of the village recollected, Gregory's mother even wanted to drown herself with the baby, but his grandfather intervened and said he would raise the boy.

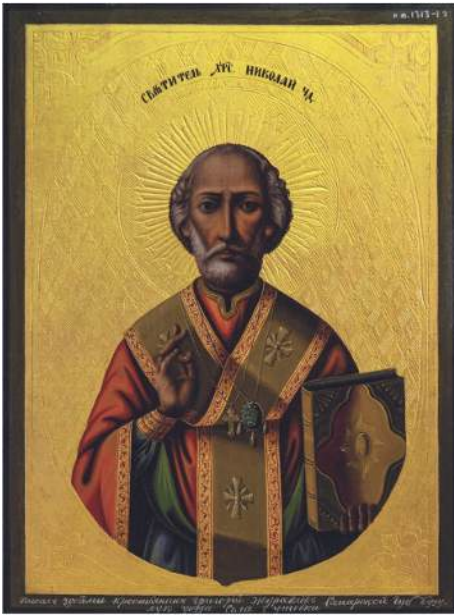
Despite his health condition, Gregory was mentally healthy and, as it turned out, quite talented. When the boy reached school age, his grandfather started carrying him to school in his arms. There, Gregory learned how to read and write, holding a quill in his teeth. When his grandfather died, the teacher began coming to Gregory's home. His classmates loved him. "A cheerful guy, the soul of the company," the people in the

village said about him.

Gregory was not only literate, but he had beautiful handwriting, or rather "teeth-writing", so that people often came asking him to write a letter or a petition. Gregory's brother Afanasy, who after the death of their parents became the "arms" and "legs" of his brother, took him along to classes: he fed him, washed him, brought him to high school and to the church. Gregory already had a habit of spending a lot of time in church, and now he decided to learn to write icons.

For that, his brother took him to the nearest city, Samara, to a local painter, asking him to give Gregory a few lessons. Soon enough, Gregory (according to some data, in just a couple of days) was back in his native village, but he returned there with his own paints, brushes and a special desk for work. He began writing icons and, after five years, he decided to present several icons to high-ranking officials of Samara, about which the Samara press of the 19th century wrote. The officials liked the icons and the local nobility became Gregory's regular customers. The iconographer was assigned an annual pension of 60 rubles (for comparison: at the time, a horse cost 20 rubles and an average salary of a factory worker was 16 rubles monthly). Gregory now even had his own apprentice.

Having established himself, Zhuravlev made a bold move: in 1884, through the governor of the Samara Region (he was personally acquainted with him), he sent to Crown Prince Nicholas (future Royal Martyr Emperor Nicholas II) an icon of Saint Nicholas. The following words accompanied the present: "Your Royal Highness, I humbly beseech You to allow this icon to Your August Name, for I



have no arms and no legs. I wrote this icon with the guidance of God Almighty, Who allowed me to see the light of day and gifted me with a talent. Then, I discovered the movement of my mouth with

which I guide my mastery at God's command."

Samara newspapers wrote in 1885: "The Crown Prince mercifully accepted the icon, written by peasant Zhuravlev, and deigned to grant him a one-time assistance in the amount of 100 rubles from His Royal Highness' Own funds".

In 1888 the train carrying the Imperial Family from Crimea to St Petersburg got derailed near Borki village in Kharkov Region. By God's mercy the Royal Family was unharmed, although the Emperor Alexander III had to hold the collapsed roof of the railroad car on his shoulders while his family escaped the crash site. Across the entire country, people sent gifts to the Imperial Palace, thus showing love for the Royal Family. Samara officials ordered an icon from Zhuravlev as a gift for the emperor. After this, Alexander III invited the self-taught iconographer to his palace. As a result, he painted the portrait of the imperial family (the painting didn't survive, but archive entries did) and received a monthly salary of 25 golden rubles.

In 1885, Zhuravlev's native village saw the construction of a stone church, designed and

frescoed by Gregory, including the incredibly complex painting of the dome, 33 feet in diameter. He was working like Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel: lying in a special cradle at a great height. Every two-three hours he took a break, because his face muscles were locking in a spasm – he could only open his mouth after a hot compress was applied to his cheeks. Over seven years of such work, pressure ulcers formed on the painter's back and back of the head, his front teeth were ground down and his sight worsened.

That temple was his main creation. The local bishop gave a blessing for him to be buried by the church

when Gregory passed away from tuberculosis in 1916.

The fate of this church was terrible under the Bolsheviks –

it was converted into a granary, and the icons (with many works of Zhuravlev among them) were brought to a kolkhoz (collective) apiary to make beehives. However, the beekeeper gave the icons to the village inhabitants in secret, asking for regular boards in return.

The church began operating again only in 1989 – and the locals began to return the surviving icons to it. Many of them, however, are still scattered around the world. As for the frescos, they were not destroyed over the years of Soviet rule, hiding behind plastering. Now, restorative work on them is underway.



Prospora and Commemoration of Orthodox Christians

We all are familiar with the significance of the Mystery of Eucharist for our salvation. But the Divine Service in which we receive the greatest gift of all has a component which might escape our attention.

We know that the word 'Liturgy' means *work of the people*: the Holy Gifts are offered by the local Christian community, on behalf of not only this community but of all to whom our love is directed. Most visibly this liturgical aspect is present in the service of Proskomedia which takes place in the altar before the Liturgy, as the public worship, begins. During the Proskomedia not only the bread and wine – which through the descent of the Holy Spirit will be sanctified into the Body and Blood of Christ – are prepared, but prayerful commemorations are made for all who are glorified by God in His Kingdom and for those whose sins, we beseech, are washed away by His precious Blood.

As five loaves were offered to Patriarch Abraham by the mysterious high priest Melchizedek, so five loaves, or prosporas, are used in Proskomedia: one from which Lamb is cut out; another one is used to cut out a triangular particle in honor of the Mother of God; the third – for the Forerunner and Baptist John, the prophets, the apostles, the holy hierarchs, the martyrs, the venerable Fathers and Mothers, the unmercenary physicians, for some specific saints including the saint of the temple and of the day, and finally for the saint whose Liturgy is

celebrated (either John Chrysostom or Basil the Great); and two more prosporas: one for the living and one for the departed. Thus, the diskos becomes an icon of the Divine Logos surrounded by all those redeemed by His precious Blood.



Now, more about the commemoration of the living and departed. Only Orthodox Christians may be commemorated at the Proskomedia. The priest commemorates the Orthodox Christians he wishes. But the rest of the community may participate in this commemoration by sending into the altar the lists of the names of the Orthodox Christians they would like to be commemorated. These lists are accompanied by small prosporas which are returned to the faithful once the commemorations are made (several commemorations can be made from one prospora). The faithful partake of the prosporas either after the Liturgy or, which is a common practice, as the first thing that they eat the following morning (or later during the week), accompanied by a sip of the Holy Water. This prayer can be said at that time: "O Lord my God, may Thy holy gift: the prospora and Thy Holy Water be unto forgiveness of my sins, unto enlightenment of my mind, unto strengthening of my spiritual and bodily powers, unto health of my soul

and body, unto vanquishing of my passions and weaknesses, by Thy boundless merciful kindness, through the prayers of Thy Most-pure Mother and all Thy Saints. Amen". One may not partake of the prosphora and the Holy Water in the morning when he is preparing to commune.

Now back to the altar. The priest takes this small prosphora into his hand and, with a special liturgical spear, removes a particle from the prosphora for each person on the list, saying "Save and have mercy on Thy servants ..." or "Remember, O Lord, the souls of Thy departed servants ...", and deposits the particles on the diskos next to the Lamb. This takes place before the Liturgy or during it but before the Great Entrance.

After the communion of the faithful, the particles taken for the living and the departed are lowered into the Holy Cup containing the Blood of Christ, while the deacon says: "Wash away, O Lord, the sins of those commemorated here with Thy precious Blood through the prayers of Thy saints".

A Note Regarding Commemoration Lists

Only names of baptized Orthodox Christians may be written on commemoration lists either for the living or the departed. If you would like to include clergy in your list, write them first in the hierarchical order (Patriarch *name*, Metropolitan *name*, Archbishop *name*, Bishop *name*, Archimandrite *name*, Archpriest *name*, Igumen *name*, Priest / Hieromonk *name*, Deacon / Hierodeacon *name*, Subdeacon *name*, Reader *name*, Monk / Nun *name*). When praying for a priest, write, for example,

"Priest Thomas", not "Fr Thomas". Only baptismal names in their full forms should be written: not Alex but Alexander or Alexandra, not Steve but Stephen, not Mike but Michael, etc.

A Message From Your New Parish Treasurer

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with heartfelt gratitude and zeal that I step into the role of Parish Treasurer, humbled by the trust you have placed in me. Together, we have a sacred opportunity to glorify God by sustaining and growing our parish, a mission deeply rooted in our faith.

Saint John Chrysostom reminds us, "The rich man is not one who has much, but one who gives much, for what he gives away remains his forever." Supporting our parish financially is more than a practical necessity—it is a spiritual act that brings us closer to God, cultivating generosity, detachment, and trust in His providence.

To make giving easier, we now offer several convenient options. Contributions can be made one-time or recurring through PayPal, Zelle, CashApp, Venmo, or via our new Zettle terminal located by the candle counter. [PayPal, Zelle: payments@stbasilthegreat.org; CashApp, Venmo: stbasilparishstl; Zettle supports over a dozen popular payment methods.]

I encourage you to develop a habit of giving, no matter the amount. Regular contributions help our parish flourish and strengthen your bond with the Church. As Saint Paul teaches, "If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?" The sacraments and pastoral care we receive are priceless gifts—our financial

support is a small price to pay in return.

In the coming months, I'll share ways to support the parish while also maximizing available tax benefits. After all, Orthodoxy embraces the "both/and"—we can both render unto Caesar and unto God. That said, let's be wise: Caesar gets only what's required, not a penny more. Together, we'll ensure every dollar serves His glory.

Thank you for joining me in this sacred work, for the glory of God and the building up of His Church.

In Christ,
Andrew Barr
Parish Treasurer

Parish Prayer List

Archimandrite Seraphim — Health

Reader Symeon Campbell — Health

Photini Mills — Health

Tatiana Zyryanova — Health

Julianna Campbell — Health

Dimitry Johnson — Health

Inna Dagaeva — Health

Mark Wiebenga — Health

Daniel Simpson — Health

Carol Surgant — Health

Barbara Westervelt — Health

Keep our parishioners, and those who ask us to pray for them, in your prayers this month. Contact Fr. Sergii to have yourself or your loved ones added to the parish prayer list. Let one of the Fathers know if you, a member of your family, or a friend is ill or hospitalized so that appropriate prayers and visits can be arranged. Please note: Hospitals do not notify clergy of patients, even if you list yourself as a parish member.

Prefer the convenience of online payments?

Make a donation from your phone using any of the methods below.

(Simply open your camera app and aim your phone at the QR Code next to your preferred payment method.)



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Zelle

You may also use our Zettle Terminal in the candle corner, to access over a dozen additional payment methods.

Thank you for supporting our parish!

Catechumen Corner

Praying for catechumens is a very important responsibility of an Orthodox Christian. So important, that a special litany or series of petitions in the Divine Liturgy is completely dedicated to asking the Lord to have mercy on all catechumens preparing for illumination. *"Let us the faithful pray for the catechumens, that the Lord will have mercy on them."*

Let us fulfill the words of the litany and pray for our fellow brothers and sisters:

- **Doc**
- **Ricardo**
- **Zachary**
- **Zachary and Kailey**
- **Theodore**
- **Ron**
- **Evan**
- **Ryan**