

THE PAST AND PRESENT OF OUR COMMUNITY

On July 1, 1918 a meeting of the Greek Orthodox faithful took place in the town of Canonsburg, PA. The purpose of the meeting was to establish a Greek Orthodox Church. Present at this historic meeting were eighty-three men. The majority of those present were from Karpathos, Crete, Rhodes, Patmos, Ikaria, Samos and Epiros.

On July 7, 1918 the community elected Mr. Michael Kontos the first president. Officers were elected and a Parish Council was formed.

On July 25, 1918 a hall was rented for the purpose of conducting church services and the first priest to serve was the Rev. K. Liakopoulos.

In the year 1925, August 23rd, a church was purchased from the Ukranian Greek Catholic Community. The All Saints Greek Orthodox Church had a permanent house of worship. The president during this period was Michael Pihakis.

One of the main features of the All Saints Church is the Iconostasion that divides the Altar from the main Naos. This beautiful work of art was built by a special craftsman from the town of Koskinou, Rhodes. Also with its outstanding twin bell towers piercing the heights, the Church could be easily seen from a distance in the heart of East End Canonsburg where most of the Greek community resided.

In 1937 His Eminence Archbishop Athenagoras came to the community to dedicate the Grecian Hall. The Grecian Hall became the focal point for all of our activities. It served as a Greek School. All the celebration and festivities took place in this beautiful two-story building.

As the faithful grew in numbers, various organizations were established for the outreach fo the community as well as to meet the needs of our ever-growing youth. Sunday Schools and Greek Schools were established. A GOYA chapter was formed for our teens; Philoptochos, the right arm of the Church, was formed, a Choir under the direction of Mrs. Anna Mahramas, and later a Dance Troupe, 60-Club (for our 'seniors'), and other youth groups such as JOY (for the 8-12 ages) and YAL for young adults.

This humble beginning of our parish inspired our faithful to move forward into the next century. It was with love and respect that we followed men like Michael Kontos, the first president of our church community in 1918, Fotios Koupiaris, our parish treasurer his entire life, and Michael Pihakis, past president and philanthropist - a true 'godfather' to many immigrant families, Tom Vlachos - a past president and one of the founding fathers of our Ahepa chapter, and Archon George Loutsion, Sr., a true leader of the church who was a past president, chanter, great benefactor and also the first member of our parish to be inducted into the order of St. Andrew. These men, and many other men and women (some of whom are still with us today) have inspired all of

us to serve our church and insure that our faith and traditions will move forward.

In July of 1989, Fr. George L. Livanos was assigned to the parish with the hopes of helping the community continue its growth and to offer spiritual direction as the parish was about to enter a new phase of life. He began working closely with the Parish Council under the leadership of the its longest serving President, Michael Kusturiss, Jr. and his father, Building Committee Chairman, Archon Michael Kusturiss, Sr. to bring to fruition a long desired parish dream: a larger church edifice with ample parking. Since the parish was growing enormously during the 70's and 80's a new church building was inevitable. With property secured on W. McMurray Road in Canonsburg, a Byzantine-style two-story building was erected in 1995 - the church upstairs and hall on the bottom level, with ample parking.

In May, 1995 the Opening of the Doors was officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh, and the faithful of All Saints Greek Orthodox Church in Canonsburg had a new home. Today, the parish hosts approximately 400 stewardship units, and over 200 youth from newborn to young adults. We are also blessed with having 5 Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate who are also very supportive of the parish, Metropolis, and Archdiocese.

Since then, the parish has not only grown in size and membership, but also in its spiritual outreach. One area of outreach is our mission work including Project Mexico, plus sending emergency aid kits to the Hurricane Katrina victims, organizing a clothing, food and school supplies drive for the needy, and the various & many philanthropic projects by our Philoptochos.

Another of the more memorable events in the community's spiritual life was the outreach mission project which the parish adopted in 2002. By the Grace of the Holy Spirit, the parishioners donated, through OCMC, the necessary funds to build a sister parish in the village of Kasikizi, Tanzania. Fr. George led a construction crew made up of a parishioner and others from the U.S. and Canada to participate in the building project. In the summer of 2004 the parish was invited by His Grace Bishop Jeronymos of Bukoba to be present at the Consecration of the new All Saints Church in Tanzania. The parish decided to cover all the expenses of the Consecration and to send Fr. George and his son, Micah, to represent the community. To this day this project continues to be a blessing to all of us.

We could literally write a book about our parish, from its humble beginnings in East End Canonsburg, to the gorgeous Byzantine structure that lights up the night skies near I-79. So many of the 'yiayias' and 'papous' that have given us hope, strength and courage - and have taught their children's children to persevere - we can't mention them all, but we know that their prayers are always with us. Their legacy has been left for us - a mighty one that shows us that, with God's protection and guiding Light and Love - there's nothing we can't do. We'll always remember them fondly - our Archons and Benefactors - From the many men who envisioned a growing Greek Orthodox community to the women who were the backbone of the families - our All Saints parish

continues to thrive because of them. We offer thanksgiving to God for all these abundant blessings and the opportunity to grow in His Name.