



"The steps of a man are ordered by the Lord." (Psalm 37:32)
Submitted by Mary Ann Khoury, Coordinator – November 2017–for 2016

Greetings to you all in this holy season of Our Lord's Nativity in the flesh. Again I ask your forgiveness for not providing this update sooner. In my last updated newsletter, I said the next newsletter would be inclusive of 2016 and 2017. As I worked on putting these 2 years together for you, I realized this would be a very large publication and may actually be more than you would want to read at one time. Not because so much has been done, but when I began including 2017, there was just more to tell than I had expected. So – this is the updated information of 2016 and will be mostly focused on the seminary commencement and where these new clergy will be placed in the diocese – thanks be to God and to the Adopt a Seminarian sponsors for these seminarians and their families.

Sibling Seminarians

Among our group of students we have a brother and sister, Elana and Gulga (Luke) Levi.

Elana is a 2nd year student. - *"The reason I came to seminary is to learn more about the Orthodox faith. What I learn here will be brought back to the surrounding villages."*

Gulga (Luke) is a 3rd year student. - *"I felt there was a need for my community to learn more about Orthodoxy and its teachings. I feel it was my calling by God to come to St. Herman Seminary to learn and to teach."*



Elana Levi



Luke Levi

- Luke Levi – He is from Lower Kalskag, AK and is a senior this coming year (2016). He will graduate in May 2016. Luke has leaned most toward the Orthodox Music and Reader education. He is very committed. However, Luke does have some difficulties with reading and physical difficulties which would prevent him from being ordained. This does not mean he would not serve. The Diocese is in great need of Choir directors and readers to serve the spacious areas and small villages. This is what I would expect for Luke and it seems to be where he would flourish most.
- Elana Levi – Elana is Luke's sister. She will be a Junior this coming year (2016). As Luke, she is from Lower Kalskag and is a single student. She has been a good student and will most likely follow in the same direction as her brother. I understand Elena also has difficulty with reading. She may consider Sunday School teaching since we are hoping to do Sunday School development in the village churches over the next few years.

Sue Nelson, Berthaud, CO. is their Adopt a Seminarian sponsor on a single plan of \$1,200 a year for each until they graduate.

St. Herman Theological Commencement – 2016

Christ is risen! It's graduation time!

Graduations involve speeches, diplomas, congratulations, smiles, tears, presents, a big cake, and tons of pictures! St. Herman's had all of this and more! Vladyka David, Bishop of Sitka and Alaska, opened the graduation ceremony with a prayer.



His Grace then introduced special guests Dr. David Ford, Professor of Church History at St. Tikhon's Theological Seminary, and Dr. Patricia Wilson-Cone of Providence Alaska Medical Center's CPE program. Archpriest Dr. John Dunlop, Seminary Dean, welcomed the gathered guests and thanked the faculty for their sacrifices.



Dr. David Ford offered a beautiful address on unity in Christ. He pointed out that unity in Christ is the very essence of the Church. The Orthodox Church in Alaska holds a very special place in North American Church history because the Church is built on an Alaskan foundation. He urged Alaskans to know that they are bonded in unity with the rest of the Church in America and throughout the world. Through Jesus Christ the whole Body of the Church is kept in oneness of heart and mind. We are all brothers and sisters in Christ.



Dr. Patricia Wilson Cone (Providence Alaska Medical Center Program Manager CPE - Clinical Pastoral Education) shared her appreciation of the hard work of Deacon Innocent and Mother Gabriella toward their CPE certificates. She was overjoyed at the cooperation between St. Herman's and Providence Alaska Medical Center. In the future this cooperation will only grow and expand and Dr. Patricia will help mentor more students in the Providence CPE program.

Archpriest Thomas Andrew, Chancellor of the Diocese, joins the presenters in congratulating the 2017 graduates.



The ceremony continued with Matushka Marilyn Kreta sharing her memories of Father Joseph Kreta, the founding Dean of the Seminary. She presented an archival gift (the first item in the upcoming donations to the Protopresbyter Joseph Kreta Collection) to the Diocesan Archive housed at the Seminary



Bishop David officially accepting the archives with Daria Safronova-Simeonoff, seminary archivist.



Mary Ann Khoury of Outreach Alaska expressed in her presentation that next year will be her final year as coordinator of Outreach Alaska. She will be sponsoring the 2017 Ladies Luncheon and Commencement Banquet with Lebanese food as a parting celebration in appreciation of all the times staff and students have hosted her with their traditional Alaska cuisine over the past 18 years. This will be part of a farewell to participation in their seminary lives.

Finally, Mary Ann completed her portion of the ceremony by showering graduating seminarians with gifts from their sponsors.



His Grace Bishop DAVID awarding the certificate to Subdeacon Gulga "Luke" Levi.



Mary Ann presenting sponsor gifts of an XL St. Luke Icon and \$300 to Subdeacon "Luke".

Adopt a Seminarian Sponsor for Subdeacon Gulga "Luke" Levi was Sue Nelson, Berthaud, CO



His Grace Bishop DAVID awarding the certificate to Rev. Father Alexander "Jopseph" Larson.

Adopt a Seminarian Sponsor for Rev. Father Alexander "Joseph" Larson was St. John of Damascus, Poway, CA



Mary Ann presenting sponsor gifts of an XL St. John of Damascus Icon and \$600 to "Fr. Joseph".



His Grace Bishop DAVID awarding the certificate to "Mary" Madsen.

Adopt a Seminarian Sponsor for Erika "Mary" Madsen was V. Rev. Fr. Gary Breton and Matushka MaryBuletza, Point Pleasant Beach, NJ



Mary Ann Khoury presenting sponsor gifts of an XL St. Xenia of Rome Icon and \$600 to "Mary".



His Grace Bishop DAVID presenting the certificate to Rev. Fr. John "Methodius" Nicori.

Adopt a Seminarian Sponsors for Fr. John "Methodius" Nocori were Greater Dallas Clergy Brotherhood and St. John of Damascus, Poway, CA



Mary Ann Khoury presenting sponsor gifts of an XL Christ on the Road Icon to Calvary and \$600.

This year, five students – Priest Joseph Larson, Priest Methodius Nicori, Mother Gabriella (Orgain), Matushka Mary Erika Madsen, and Sub deacon Luke Levi – graduated and Sub deacon James Keene received his Church Reader's Certificate. Also, former seminarian Deacon Innocent received his Clinical Pastoral Education Certificate. Our graduates will go on to serve Orthodox communities throughout Alaska.



Mother Gabriella Orgain



Deacon Innocent



Subdeacon James Keene

More gifts for the graduates -

Wait – a mother wants to speak and His Grace gives her the podium. Yes, the mother of Fr. Joseph Larson takes over the whole program when she moves to the front with her beloved gift. By gummy – this mother had something to say and made sure she was going to say it. She wants to give a gift to her son and tell all how she is so proud of him and that she never expected him to make it. There was much glee and love from this lady and from all present as she had her moment. Also, a few loving tears. Good for you Mama Larson and for your son, Fr. Joseph – smiling from ear to ear at his Mama. This was the highlight of the entire commencement!



His Grace presents gifts to Drs. Ford.



His Grace and Chancellor present gifts to newly ordained clergy.



V. Rev. Fr. Innocent Dresdow, Dean of Holy Resurrection Cathedral presents gifts.



Sisterhood presents gifts to the graduates.

2016 Commencement Reception and Banquet

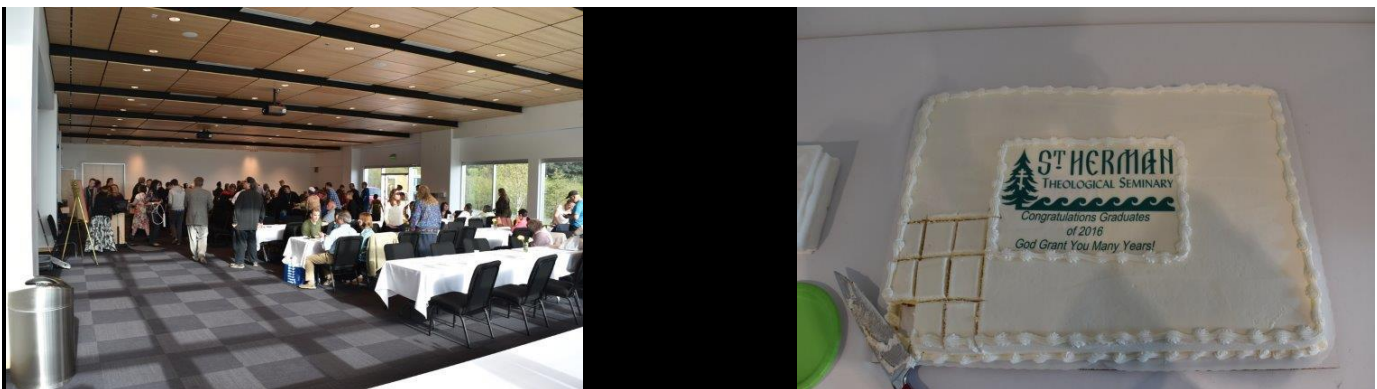
Bishop David closed the ceremony with a prayer and a blessing. After partaking of a small homemade feast prepared by seminary cook Matushka Elsie Nicori, clergy, seminarians, their families, and guests had fellowship at the beautiful Afognak Native Corporation building. Everyone had many stories to share and many pictures to take.



Graduates visit with His Grace, Bishop David, Chancellor Fr. Thomas Andrew, and Mary Ann Khoury.



Mary Ann with friend and Outreach Alaska benefactor, Linda Madsen.



The 2016 graduates have been given their assignments by Bishop DAVID for service in the diocese. Fr. Joseph Larson has been set to develop mission churches in the Kuskokwim River area: Akiak, Tuluksak, and Akiachak. Currently there are no mission churches in any of these villages. Fr. Joseph has already planned on how he will begin this work.

Ericka Mary Madsen is planning to work in a program with the Diocese known as the “Wellness Center”. This summer she and her husband, Deacon Herman Madsen will be in Sitka assisting St. Michael the Archangel Cathedral with tours and other summer tourist activities.

Newly ordained Father Methodius and Matushka Elsie are being asked to return to seminary next year to work more in the Clinical Pastoral Program. This will give him more hands on experience in hospital, jail and other community ministry before he is actually assigned a parish. This will be completed for 2017 commencement.

Sub deacon Luke has been active in Reader services and choir and will do this for his home parish in Lower Kalskag when he returns there after commencement. He will be assisting Fr. Nicholas Isaac, his priest there, with services and will travel to villages where there is no church to provide Reader services and choir training. He wants to train Orthodox wherever there is no priest. He will also be assisting Fr. Joseph with developing missions where he has been assigned. Luke will also be seeking paid employment after graduation.

This was a very productive year for the seminary. Through the [Outreach Alaska](#) “Adopt a Seminarian” project all seminarians were fully sponsored and the St. Julianna Food Pantry was readily stocked for their use when needed. This year’s Ladies Luncheon was enjoyed by all of the women of the seminary (staff, seminary wives, local supporters) and blessed when His Grace Bishop David joinus for the lovely Lenten meal.



As the weekend activities closed, the students returned to their seminary residences and began to prepare for their trips home to remote Alaska and to begin the work they are now trained for and assigned to do in the Orthodox Alaska Vineyard. Their summer months will be filled with preparation for their new beginnings and mixed with their traditional fishing and berry picking for the winter months ahead. May God grant them a fruitful harvest and blessings as they move forward to the glory of His Name doing His Will – growing in His Love and Guidance.

**Thank you all for your support in prayer and donations to the New Alaska Mission –
[Outreach Alaska](#)**