

REPORT FROM BP. JOSHUA REGARDING THE RECEPTION OF OUR NEWEST PARISH

After approximately a year and a half of building relationships, teaching them the catechism, providing clergy training and liturgical training, and offering counsel and encouragement in the transition, on April 7, 2024, Edgemoor Abbey was received as St. Thomas Evangelical Orthodox Church, 11 members chrismated, and a priest and 2 deacons ordained.



Pastor Brad Haden was ordained as Fr. James Haden, and Matt Meadows and Evan Glasscock were ordained as Dn. Matthew and Dn. Evan respectively. Bp. Jakob Palm, bishop of our church in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, concelebrated the event with me, and 2 priests and a

deacon from our sponsoring parish in Indianapolis added their hands and prayers as well.

To say that this was a glorious event would be an understatement. On the one hand, from the moment that Kathy and I first met the Hadens, it seemed that we had known each other for a long time. That like-mindedness and instant friendship made the transition of



the last year and a half so much more enjoyable. And yet, as with any such transition from being an independent evangelical church to becoming a sacramental, liturgically worshipping parish in the covenant communion of the EOC, the process was not without its challenges. However, this is a faith community that knows how to weather storms and remain faithful. And their joy in going further up and deeper into the Faith-



once-for-all-delivered-to-the-saints is infectious and very heartening and commendable. As a recent expression of that, here is Fr. James' comments a week after the reception service:

"Brothers and Sisters –

Today, we celebrated our first, full Divine Liturgy as St. Thomas Evangelical Orthodox Church, and Sharon and I have spent the afternoon reflecting on the extraordinary journey of the past couple years.

This journey, which began on March 17, 2022 at a funeral in a Serbian Orthodox Church, crescendoed last Sunday with a joyous, yet most unexpected celebration. The path, from there to here, can best be understood as one where our Lord, once again, had to turn over the tables in His temple. All that we had grown to depend upon was lovingly and faithfully upended and we were left with nothing but Him. He truly is jealous for us. And He brought us to that place so we would be able to receive the wonderful gift He planned to give us – a renewed calling through our relationship with all of you.

We've talked at length about the miraculous circumstances around our initial meeting, but there is so much that came before that moment to make our meeting possible, specifically, your faithfulness. We can only imagine the emotion and struggle you all experienced in 1987 when your brothers and sisters left for the Antiochian Church, and then again in 2000 when others left for the OCA. The strongest faith can still be commingled with lingering doubt – how easy it would've been for you all to have just given up. But you didn't. You continued to trust in the promises God made to you long ago – you have remained steadfast in your faith, and your brothers and sisters in Edgemoor are very thankful you did! God has been faithful to you and through you, and you have also been faithful to Him. Praise God for conforming us to the image of His Son!

So, thank you. Thank you for your faithfulness, for without it, last week would not have been possible. Our Lord said that He came that we might have life and have it abundantly – when we look at the picture of all us together in our backyard, that is exactly what we see – abundant life! Praise God!

We love you all and we're so eager for the next time we can all be together."

In Christ,

Fr. James & Sharon



We are very proud to call St. Thomas EOC one of our parishes, and I am sure that we will learn from them as much as they may learn from us. As a church before we met them, they had already worked hard at being an intentional eucharistic community with weekly communion and a strong body life together. Fr. James, Dn. Matthew, and Dn. Evan are servants to the core, and all have loving, shepherd's hearts. But don't let the tenderness and gentleness fool you – they are also fierce defenders of the Faith, the Bible, the faithful, and the broken and downcast.

In short, St. Thomas EOC is a great addition to the EOC communion of churches. If you are a fellow member of another EOC parish, I hope you will take a moment and welcome them to the EOC.

As was prayed at the end of the reception service:

"Blessed are You forever, O God our Father, who has called these precious ones together in this place and has blessed them, and who has been gracious to add them into our communion of churches; Do now, we pray, look upon all who celebrate Your goodness here; (Sprinkling holy water) establish them and this place unto the glory of Your Name. Accept and bless all that has been done here and that which is yet to be done, the worship and ministry of your people. Grant that without condemnation they may continually offer here their exaltations unto You, through Your Son, and in the power of Your Spirit; and may the fruit of their love be manifested in others coming to join them in the proclamation of the Gospel and the worship of Your Great Name!"

I look forward to growing together with these faithful saints in the days and months and years to come, and may the Lord see fit to add more churches to the EOC with such humble, teachable hearts, and with such unwavering desire for the Lord and His Kingdom as our brothers and sisters at St. Thomas EOC.

In Christ,
Bp. Joshua