

**Deanery Report – Atlanta Deanery
Diocesan Assembly – July 21 – July 24, 2009
Atlanta, Georgia**

ALABAMA

St. Simeon the New Theologian – Birmingham - This past year at St. Symeon Church in Birmingham there were 9 Baptisms - 5 adults and 4 infants - plus one adult Chrismation. Pascha attendance was the highest ever (approx. 200). A Building Fund has been initiated. Recent events include Youth Lenten Retreat (35 participants); Parish Picnic May 31 (included moonwalk, games and races and other children's activities - record attendance); Parish Yard Sale (offering inexpensive clothing and other items to the needy). During the spring, our youth, with adult assistance, prepared and served four Saturday dinners at a local downtown homeless shelter. There is a separate alms collection and family needs within the parish community are supported with it, as well.

St. Gregory the Great – Tuscaloosa - This year was a totally busy year of property acquisition, clean-up and occupancy for St. Gregory's. The 6,000 square foot facility had been a part of Alabama University as a lab facility. It was purchased from the University and used as an independently owned water treatment and purification facility. St. Gregory's purchase certainly raises "water" to a truly Biblical place...a parish home. There is a central corridor down the center of the long building, separating two equal halves. One half houses a classroom, restrooms, storage room, bookstore/gift shop, Pastor's office and another classroom. The second half houses the soon to be expanded and finished worship space, a very large kitchen, a storage room/classroom space and the room they are presently using for worship (this room alone is approx. equal the previous, rented facility!) There is excitement, anticipation and expectations heretofore not seen. These folks have done well and will grow accordingly!

St. Luke Mission - Anniston - [the words of an excited, newly-ordained priest!! – great stuff!] I was ordained a priest at last year's Diocesan Assembly and subsequently assigned to St. Luke Mission in Anniston, Alabama. We began the mission with only 3 members, Matushka Cana, Dr. Carla Thomas, M.D. and myself (Fr. Basil Henry). But we quickly found the fields of Anniston to be ripe for the harvest. This year we have chrismated five adults and baptized/chrismated two children; bringing our current membership to ten. We currently have three catechumens and several inquirers. Over the past few months we discovered a local Greek family who are members of the Greek cathedral in Birmingham (an hour from here). They have begun attending services at St. Luke and celebrated Pascha with us for the first time in years. We have heard of other Greek and Romanian families in the area and are reaching out to them to join our community as well. We typically have about twenty to twenty-five attending the Divine Liturgy and had a record seventeen communicants on Lazarus Saturday. By the end of the year, two Orthodox families will be relocating to Anniston to join in our missionary labors. Retired Antiochian Archpriest Stephen Rhudy and his wife (Matushka Cana's parents) will move here from Indiana. Scott and Megan Brightwell along with their new baby

will join us from St. Mary of Egypt in Atlanta. Both families will greatly enrich the Orthodox community in Anniston.

In addition to our regular cycle of divine services, classes and fellowship, we undertook several special events this year. In October of 2008, we set up an Orthodox booth at the "Oxfordfest" Craft Fair. The booth gave out hundreds of brochures about the Orthodox Faith and St. Luke Mission, sold books, crosses, icons, Bibles and crafts. In December, we visited a local nursing home on St. Nicholas Day to celebrate a Holiday program for the residents including a Christmas Carol sing-a-long. At Paschal Agape Vespers, we hosted students from the International House at nearby Jacksonville State University. One of our new members is a professor of mathematics at the University and future plans include significant outreach to the campus and in time the formation of an OCF. In May, we had Fr. Jerome Sanderson, from Indiana, come and deliver an inspiring lecture on prayer: "Touching the Hem of His Garment," which can be accessed as a podcast on our website. Fr. Jerome, an outstanding iconographer and craftsman, also brought us our new beautifully and intricately hand carved altar and a new icon of Christ.

One of the central goals of our mission is outreach to the African American community. Our desire is to share with them the treasures of the Ancient African Orthodox heritage and to invite them home to it. As part of this mission, we are planning to host the Regional Conference of the St. Moses the Black Brotherhood this upcoming year.

The Noble Park properties have been undergoing extensive renovation this year and we anticipate moving into the new Temple space in the next few months. This will provide ample room for growth while we undertake the challenge of fundraising, designing and constructing a new Temple on adjacent property being purchased for this intention. A hospice and assisted living facility is in the process of being established on the Noble Park property by Dr. Carla Thomas, M.D. This will prove to be an important ministry of mercy to the local community. Other current charitable ministries include programs for free medical care, prescriptions, and a small food bank. Our vision for the future includes a new parish hall, cemetery, and conference facilities. It has been an eventful and challenging year at St. Luke in Anniston and we pray that God will continue to bless the work being done to establish His Temple here in the Deep South. (ed. Note: - All this within the first year...let's just watch as this vision takes wondrous shape!! May this enthusiasm never wane!)

Montgomery Mission Station – The three stalwart faithful of this fledgling mission station have had their share of 'ups & downs' in recent times. They have struggled with a family member falling asleep in the Lord, one other losing a job and several folks coming and going. They will be fine, given time and prayers. The Mission Station could do well with clergy who could serve both Columbus, GA. and Montgomery, AL. on alternating weekends. Let us pray to the Lord!!

GEORGIA

St. Innocent – Macon – We have had three Chrismations and one Baptism since our last report. We now have three Catechumens and three Inquirers. With the help of the Diocese we are refinancing our Parish's mortgage. This should cut our mortgage payment in half, and provide the basis for a "full-time priest's salary".

Our OCF Chapter at Mercer U in Macon is suspended for the summer. There is a core group of faithful attending students who attend our St. Innocent and also Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church. Fr Julian, pastor of Holy Cross, has attended the OCF meetings. Fr Julian, together with Reader John Hintermaier and his wife Heidi, Reader Tom Kehayes and I are sponsors for this activity. John is a professor at Mercer. John & Heidi are doing a great job of ministering to the students and Heidi as well prepares delicious snacks for the OCF gatherings

Our Prison Ministry at Central State Prison in Macon is active. One of the Orthodox inmates was released and is now attending St. Innocent Church.

St. John the Wonderworker - Atlanta – St. John's has continued to grow over the past year. We have new members and even were about to Baptize a Jewish woman and her daughter, which we made sure to tell Archbishop Dmitri before he retired because about 4 years ago he asked us to bring NON CHRISTIANS into the Orthodox faith and this woman and her daughter were the first that we at St. John's were able to have a part in their becoming Orthodox. More people are beginning to come daily to our early morning Matins and Divine Liturgy services ...about 5 or 6. It is a wonderful thing when people get up early to pray together. I hope over the next year that we have even more people praying regularly with us throughout the week.

Seven young people have graduated from our Orthodox School...a few of whom were here when the school began 7 or 8 years ago. We had a large amount of teachers for the school this year as a lot of people wanted to give their time to help educate our youth. Many of the young people, who before were shy about reading in our prayer services at 8:15AM and Noon for the school, decided to read this year and it was lovely to see our youth leading the service of Hours. We had quite a joyous and active group of youngsters in our school this year. We may have a smaller group next year at the school until we are able to get more people from Atlanta to send their children. It certainly is a good and challenging "education."

We continue to serve many people in our Loaves and Fishes Food Program. Our previous source of donated meat for the program stopped this year; but we have had plenty of help from various local sources so we could continue to feed the homeless men and women we serve daily. We really named our program correctly, as the Lord seems to always bring us exactly what we need in order for the people to be fed well. That includes volunteers who have come from all over Atlanta to work and serve. Any who come find plenty to do. The Lord said, "...the poor you have always with you" and this has surely been the case in our difficult economy. Our Christmas program distributed food and toys to over 100 families, with over 600 children receiving toys this year. We had so many presents donated for them from Orthodox all over the city and other Christians as well. We have become a real source of giving for the Orthodox Churches of Atlanta, who help us throughout the year with food, money, volunteers, and toys. Our Christmas day meal was a complete success, serving over 150 men a delicious meal on Christmas day. Many, many Orthodox Christians join us and bring their families to volunteer on Christmas Day at our church to help the poor have a joyous Christmas as well.

Our spiritual reading during Lent this year was the WISDOM OF MT. ATHOS by St. Silouan, which many in the church read and we had classes throughout the Lenten Season. We are grateful for our beloved retired bishop who gave us at St. John's so much love and support and for our new Archpastor, Metropolitan Jonah. And we certainly invite His Beatitude to often

attend the Feast Day of our Patron, St. John Maximovitch who was also the patron of his monastery where he was Abbot.

St. Mary of Egypt – Norcross – This community is truly blessed and so grateful for that! Fr. Cyprian DuRant is the assigned assistant priest here with me. In addition, the Lord has “attached” Fr. Thomas Alessandroni and his wife Angela to be with us. Fr. David Hudson and his wife Mary were with us, but have taken a ministry with the Romanian community near Gary, Ind. Not to “short change” us, the Lord has sent Fr. Dimitri Oselinsky and his wife Mary Ann in retirement to bring us to four again! The “luxury” of this real blessing is to free myself and Fr. Cyprian to do mission work for the Deanery. It has produced, and will soon again produce, great fruit.

Our faithful number around 140, though not all are “members.” Our variety includes converts from other communions, Romanian, Serbian, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Russian, Ukrainian and Greek Orthodox; as well as several catechumens and seekers. We are truly diverse and energetic community!! Beneath this diversity is our active and supportive Pan-Orthodox Brotherhood of 18 priests and 15 communities in the Metro Atlanta area.

Locally, we are presently collecting for our “BACK TO SCHOOL SHOES” Program, we held a “BIZARRE BAZAAR AND PIG ROAST” for the neighborhood to get to know us, we are assisting as we can at a local Nursing Home and we will host our 2nd Annual Women’s Retreat with Mother Thekla presenting this year. We have an active Woman’s Fellowship that meets at various homes monthly [a “Knit & Chat” group], an ‘interesting’ Men’s Group (meeting in the ‘Man Cave’) which meets semi-regularly, various education activities throughout the year – in fact, Deacon Lazarus holds adult classes (a-la Jeopardy) each week, we hold supporting activities with OCF and a local OYP (Orthodox Young Professionals) group meeting at various churches in the city, and catechumen/inquirer classes that meet at a local STARBUCKS. We are presently seeking to purchase a neighboring house and property in order to offer housing or rental property for elderly or perhaps retired clergy. And of course, SMEOCA is co-hosting this Assembly along with St. John the Wonderworker... joyfully!! God bless all!

St. Mary Magdalene - Rincon – The Parish includes 40 adults, 12 children, and 4 Catechumens, for a total membership of 56... our highest in all of our 20 years! St. Mary Magdalene has one Hieromonk, one Deacon and two Readers in its membership.

We own 2 acres of land, upon which stands a 32-foot by 80-foot double-wide trailer. Fr. James has two private rooms for himself in the Residence, and the rest of the building has a large kitchen and eating area, a very large Fellowship area (for the Consecration brunch for our new church building in June of 2007 we sat 110 down to lunch. Thankfully, no one sneezed or the walls would have blown out!), a combination Sunday School/Treasurer’s office/Guestroom, a full bath, a half bath and a utility room.

At the back of the property stands a 25-foot by 25-foot picnic pavilion which was built by Deacon Vassily, as well as two small storage sheds.

The new Worship Temple is approximately 34-feet by 80-feet and has great acoustics! Outside-at the back of the Temple - stands a shrine which holds the Cross that the membership planted on June 3rd, 2002, when we claimed the land for God.

Approximately 4 years ago, our Sisterhood came into existence and offers our women a ministry and outreach for our parish. The Sisterhood, normally numbering around 15 ladies, now makes pierogies and halupki(?) on a monthly basis and is gaining a reputation in our area for the quality of their food. In addition, in 2008 the Sisterhood produced a cookbook (with 475 recipes) which has sold very well.

Once a year the parish holds a Yard sale, usually in June, and at the end of October 2008 we saw our first “Annual Russian Festival”. Over 250 people came, ate and explored the exhibits and kiosk. In addition, our choir put on 3 concerts during that day, each concert being composed of 3 Liturgical pieces and 3 Folk pieces.

St. Mary Magdalene Church tithes 38% of its monthly income to the Diocese.

St. John Chrysostom Mission – Columbus – The Reader Joseph Rice is the contact person and principal ‘go-to guy’ for the Mission; while Fr. Cyprian serves them monthly. They recently had a “reorganization meeting” in order to redefine and rejuvenate the faithful. They have rented a larger facility than they had at the St. Francis Hospital in downtown Columbus. This facility will serve them well for the foreseeable future; but with anticipated growth, they may be soon looking for more accommodating ‘digs.’ With some new ‘assignments,’ new members and a new enthusiasm, the Mission is looking for good times ahead.

Sts. Constantine and Helen Mission – The Mission is composed of 8 adults, 1 child and 1 Catechumen - a total of 9 members. The Mission has one Reader in its membership. They own 2 acres of land, upon which they moved a double-wide trailer and renovated it, giving them a chapel, a kitchen/Fellowship area, two classrooms and two bathrooms. To proclaim their identity, they have a large sign on the property fronting the main road, as well as a large Orthodox cross on the front of the building. Also on the property is a small house which they are in the process of renovating in order to offer a Priest for the Mission a place to live, in addition to a modest stipend.

Once a month, the Mission is ministered to by Deacon Vassily and Fr. James (Bohlman) of St. Mary Magdalene Church in Rincon, GA. Fr. James hears Confessions, conducts the Divine Liturgy, gives classes on the faith and conducts the monthly Parish Council meeting. In addition, he has performed two weddings at the Mission, a Baptism, a Chrismation and the reception of an individual into the Catechumenate. Even though the membership is limited, the Mission tithes 10% of its income to the Diocese on a monthly basis.

Dahlonega Mission Station – The Mission Station has been up and down in their attempts to coalesce. There is a great possibility that activity might be a reality soon in the area near Gainesville – not far from Dahlonega. We pray for this to take shape.

Valdosta Mission Station – Rather distant from Atlanta, this group has had periodic visits from Fr. Theodore Pisarchuk and the clergy of St. Justin the Martyr.