

South Central (Dallas) Deanery

Diocese of the South

Report for 2008 Assembly

Dallas, TX

Territory Covered:

The South Central Deanery includes 24 parishes, missions and institutions in 6 states: Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Numerically and geographically this is the largest Deanery in the Diocese.

Since the last Diocesan Assembly, Fr. Joseph Fester stepped down as dean and was appointed by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, as chancellor of the Diocese of the South. His Beatitude approved Fr. Seraphim Hipsh as Dean for the Dallas Deanery. The clergy of the South Central deanery are grateful for the dedicated service of Father Joseph Fester while dean of the deanery.

New and Continued Mission Efforts Within The Deanery:

Exploratory work and meetings are taking place within the following cities to facilitate the establishment of new communities:

Alpine, Texas: St. Jonah of Moscow. Population, 5,786 people. Median Age, 34 years. Served by Fr. John Filipovich. (served on the 3rd weekend of the month) Located in the Davis Mountains (named for Jefferson Davis), the Alpine Mission-Station is perhaps the highest installation in the Diocese at 4,475 feet above sea level. Father John's house is even higher: 118' higher in elevation than Denver (we like to brag in Texas). From September 2008 to February 2009 it was visited once a month, by Fr. John Filipovich, who traveled from Oklahoma City (as 12-hour drive - one way). In December 2008, Archbishop Dmitri blessed the Mission with a patron: St. Jonah of Moscow. In March 2009, Fr. John moved to Alpine. Because of his being in residence, the Mission-Station was able to celebrate the end of Holy Week and Pascha with a priest. Since May, St. Jonah Mission-Station has had a weekly Wednesday evening Vespers and class, in addition to currently being served on the 3rd weekend of each month. Since the beginning of July, a mid-week Divine Liturgy (usually on Thursday mornings) is also being celebrated.

Later this summer, a retired Episcopal priest and his wife, who have been attending services at the Mission for over a year will be received, God willing, into Orthodoxy.

People-wise, we're still a small group. With everybody in attendance we number about 13 at Services. But, we're determined: In March, the Mission rented a house for its use. The house is across the street from Sul Ross State University. Our sign has generated some positive contact by some with University connections (one with a PhD in 'Byzantine Art'; another with a PhD in Philology & Hermeneutics).

The Mission is exploring the possibilities of installing a wireless Internet connection, and opening a 'coffee house,' at least a couple evenings per week, as a means of outreach to the student body and staff at the University as well as to the whole community.

The Mission is also exploring local ranches with the goal of one day being able to host retreats, camps etc for individuals and parishes in the Diocese as well as Orthodox Churches/groups of other jurisdictions. With its mountainous elevation, the summertime temperatures in the Alpine area are somewhat cooler than might be expected for Texas, with daytime highs rarely above 85 and night time lows in the 60s (or, cooler) and very low humidity. We're 100 miles north of Big Bend National Park and we invite one and all to come visit us and enjoy the beautiful vistas and the vibrant Cowboy Culture in the Big Bend Region of southwest Texas.

Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Population, 224,097 people. Median Age, 30 years. Now served by newly ordained Fr. Mark Christian. The mission moved to a new 1300 sq ft rented storefront in July 2008. Our new location gives us considerably better visibility and accessibility. We were blessed to have a mission team from St. Athanasius Church in Nicholasville, KY, led by Fr. Justin Patterson, assist with the move. We continued to hold Reader's Typika every Sunday and visiting priests served Great Vespers and Divine Liturgy one Sunday each month until Fr. Mark Christian was ordained to the Holy Priesthood. Until this point, Fr. Matthew Jackson served a Sunday afternoon Typika with Holy Communion one Sunday each month. Fr. David Rucker also visited in December 2008 and shared news of the OCMC. Archpriest Joseph Fester visited in January 2009 and met with our newly formed mission council. Following Fr. Mark's ordination Archpriest Ted Pisarchuk held a church planning workshop in March. Adult Education classes have been held regularly. In the past year we have Baptized two children, Chrismated two adults, and received several persons back into the Orthodox Faith. Held our first altar-server training workshop in June, with four men participating. Our mission family includes about fifty people, approximately half of whom are active communicants. We have had a number of students and researchers from Louisiana State University who participate actively during their time in Baton Rouge. Our congregation includes Russians, Ukrainians, Lebanese, Jordanians, Georgians, Romanians, and a number of converts. We have welcomed several of families with young children and are working with ten inquirers. Average Sunday attendance since March 2009 has been around 25. God keep us as we continue to labor in His vineyard.

Kerrville, Texas: Population, 20,425 people. Median Age, 45 years. Served by Priest Paul Burholt. The town is 58 miles Northwest of San Antonio and 85 miles West of Austin. The Protecting Veil of the Most Holy Theotokos continues its development as they have now moved to their own space. Up until this point, the mission has been meeting in the home of Mark Scotts. God bless this family as they have strongly supported the mission and because of their efforts we have been able to continue to hold regular services, even for Holy Week and Pascha. It is with sadness that we announce Fr. Paul Burholt's intention to move to another state. His work has been tremendously blessed and we ask that God would continue to increase His Grace in his ministry.

Victoria, Texas: All Saints Mission Station serves a city with a population 60,603 people and the County Seat of Victoria County. Victoria, TX is located 30 miles from the Gulf of Mexico and is 2 hours from Corpus Christi, Houston, San Antonio, and Austin. The mission continues to have regular Saturday Great Vespers and Sunday Liturgy celebrated three weekends a month by Fr Dimitri Cozby, who travels from San Antonio. There is a Readers Service on the Sundays he is unable to visit. Services are held in a waiting room of Victoria Eye Center, a clinic owned by one of the parishioners. However, construction has begun on our new temple, and the mission anticipates moving in this fall.

The mission has eight or nine households who regularly attend, plus three or four more whom we see from time to time. Average attendance for Sunday Liturgy ranges from a dozen to about two dozen. The Mission contains a mix of Greek-Americans, foreign-born Greeks, former Western Rite Antiochians, and converts from various other faiths. We received one convert from the Roman Catholic confession last September. We currently also have a former Anglican pre-catechumen attending regularly.

St. Francisville, LA: Population 1,789 Median Age 34. Serviced by Priest Matthew Jackson. This mission outreach is being done by Fr. Matthew Jackson in McComb, MS. Monthly vespers and education is conducted. Members of Fr Jackson's parish in St Francisville are the nucleus for this mission-station.

Hattiesburg, MS: Population 48,012. Median Age 27.1. Serviced by Priest Matthew Jackson. An OCF outreach to the University of South Mississippi by Fr. Matthew Jackson has been established. It is hoped that this effort may bear fruit in the future in planting a mission in Hattiesburg. In the meantime, parishioners from Fr Jackson's mission in McComb are assisting in the development of the OCF and other outreach efforts.

Clovis, NM: Served by Fr. John Filipovich. At this time, services at the Mission Station will be postponed until later this year.

Round Rock, TX: Population 92,000. Median Age 30.1. Serviced by Fr. John Filipovich. Founded in 2007. In January 2009, the Austin mission moved into a small rented space in Georgetown, Texas. We are located close to I-35 and near the Sun City retirement development. Prior to the move, we were averaged 4-6 people per week at rented hotel space. Since the move, we have been blessed to be served twice a month by Fr. John for Vespers and Divine Liturgy. We have also started holding Typika services when Fr. John is not present. Our mission is consistently averaging 15-20 people for Divine Liturgy when a priest is present, with a high of 28. Whenever we have more than 20 people our space is severely limited. Unfortunately, during Typika weeks, we average between 5 and 7 people, and giving drops accordingly. In the Austin area, there are several Orthodox parishes and it is clear that this mission is limited by the inability to offer weekly Liturgy when there are other options within a 30-45 minute driving distance.

In 2009, we have added a choir director and the choir is practicing weekly. We also extend our thanks to Fr. Theodore Pisarchuk and Fr. Sergius Clark at St. Justin Martyr for their support of our mission and for making Fr. Sergius available for Pascha services!

Parishes and Missions within the Deanery (Highlights):

ARKANSAS:

SS. George and Alexandra Mission, Fort Smith. Founded 1996. Archpriest John Maxwell and Priest Paul Fetsko. *Additional information will be forth coming..*

MISSISSIPPI:

Christ the Savior Mission, McComb. Founded 2004. Priest Matthew Jackson. *Additional information will be forth coming.*

Holy Resurrection Church, Clinton/Jackson. Founded 1977. Archpriest Paul Yerger. Herein is the report from Father Paul Yerger... "We thank God that Holy Resurrection enjoyed a good year. Since the last Assembly we have baptized 3 children, chrismated 4 adults, buried 1 member, and married 1 couple. We have had 14 Orthodox adults and children begin attending and 8 move away. We have about 125 members who come with some regularity, of whom about 50 are children. At Sunday Liturgy we average 75 - 85 people present (by the time for the Dismissal). At present we have 2 adult catechumens and 7 regular visitors.

On June 1, 2008, I completely retired from my secular job (I had been working three days a week the last few years) so this was the first year I have been working full-time for the Church. I wish I could say this brought in the Kingdom, but I'm not sure there has been a big difference in Church life. It has definitely been easier for me, and it's good to be able to spend more time with families at times of surgery or death.

This was our second year in our new buildings, and our expenses are higher. We had a few months of tight finances but this is now improving.

We continue to add icons. Fr. Andrew Tregubov of Claremont, NH, is our main iconographer. He has given us a plan for the whole Temple emphasizing the Resurrection since that is our name. This year we received our first big mural, the Appearance of the Lord at the Sea of Tiberias (St. John 21), 12 feet wide and 8 feet tall. We also received portrait icons of St. Mary of Egypt, St. Joseph of Arimathea, St. Katherine, and the Prophet Elias. We have ordered the Pantocrator for the ceiling, 8 feet in diameter, as well as portraits of St. Herman, St. Juliana the Merciful, and the Prophet Moses.

We had Fr. Jacob Myers here to speak three days in February. This was edifying and attracted some visitors. The Sunday after Christmas we advertised an "open house" for local people to have a tour of the Temple and coffee. This also attracted some visitors although another time would have been better.

This June we sent 8 young people to camp for two weeks at Antiochian Village in Pennsylvania. Most of these were subsidized by the Church. We find this to be a very good experience that strengthens our youth in Orthodoxy.

We have a very close relationship with the two Antiochian and one Greek Churches in the area. The priests have lunch together monthly and we have several joint services each year, including the Blessing of Water at a local reservoir on the Sunday afternoon after Theophany. This year was our turn to host the other churches for the Paschal Vespers and picnic, which was a great joy.”

NEW MEXICO:

All Saints of North America Mission, Albuquerque. Founded 1979. Archpriest George Sondergard. Fr George continues to labor with great dedication although health issues have forced him to cut back his normal pastoral schedule. *Additional information will be forth coming.*

St. Dmitri of Rostov Mission. Founded 1990. Priest John Hennies . *Additional information will be forth coming.*

St. Michael's Skete, Canoñes. Founded in 1993. Hieromonk John (Anderson). (See separate report from the Skete)

OKLAHOMA:

Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church, Hartshorne. Founded 1897. Archpriest Joseph Nelson. Located in rural and mountainous Southeast Oklahoma, Sts. Cyril and Methodius is the oldest community in the Diocese, having a beautiful and traditional Church with three onion domes, a modern parish hall, a rectory and over seven acres of land.

Holy Apostles Mission, Bixby, OK. Founded 2004. Priest Ambrose Arrington. Holy Apostles Orthodox Christian Church in Bixby, Oklahoma, in 2008 completed its first full year in its new church facilities. By the grace of God, the parish continues to grow by various means. Since the Diocesan Assembly last summer, we have celebrated six baptisms and chrismations (three infants and three adults), two weddings, and the consecration of St. Matthew's Chapel. We currently have 2 catechumens and several inquirers. Our schedule of services continues to intensify, with the Divine Liturgy being celebrated at least twice a week (Sunday and Thursday), as well as various other services. One of our members participated in Project Mexico this summer. We are also this summer hosting for the first time a Pan-Orthodox Women's Retreat. We are currently working on several areas that are in need of our attention: facility development, charitable outreach (expanding our food pantry), youth activities/retreat, adult education, and evangelism. On this last topic, we serve Vespers once a month on Sunday evening in Claremore, about one hour northeast of the church (from which several families come faithfully). We also serve the Divine Liturgy every two weeks for the faithful of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Hartshorne,

Oklahoma, who are currently without a priest. This fall for the first time we will be sending two families to St. Vladimir's Seminary.

TEXAS:

St. Seraphim of Sarov Cathedral, Dallas. Founded 1954. Archbishop Dmitri (Royster) Archpriest Joseph Fester, Priest John Anderson. With the retirement of His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri, who is still ever-present here, we are enjoying the visits of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah as he is able to modify his very busy schedule to return home to Dallas!

His Beatitude presented to the Cathedral parish council a "Memo of Understanding" in which he outlined his vision for the Cathedral. Five ministries are targeted: charity, education, youth and young adults, seniors, and men's and women's groups. All these ministries are intended to promote greater community building with opportunities for Cathedral members to grow closer.

The Cathedral council has already devoted significant time to implementing the charity ministry. A detailed proposal is being submitted to His Beatitude for his review. Steps to implement the Cathedral education program are also underway with new Inquirers' class being taught by Cathedral lay catechists. Inquirers will now be grouped into classes to help foster community-building within the group while the inquirers begin to become part of the greater Cathedral community. An Inquirers class for Russian speakers is conducted on a regular basis. A "moms with kids" group held on the first Friday of the month with Father Fester (4F Group) continues to grow. It will be expanded to a twice monthly gathering, discussing topics important to family and spiritual life. A Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday evening adult class for Orthodox are also offered. A young adults group is meeting once-a-month, a men's club is trying to get organized while a Seniors ministry has not been undertaken yet.

At Pascha the Cathedral received 22 catechumens into the Orthodox Church. These included one former Buddhist and one former Muslim. Attendance at the Sunday Divine Liturgy is usually 200+. Starting a new mission in the greater Dallas area is being discussed.

His Beatitude would like the Cathedral liturgical life to expand with less lay led reader services during the week and more daily or great Vespers and Divine Liturgies. We are considering adding a daily Vespers on Monday evening as preparation for the Tuesday morning Liturgy that is already celebrated as well as the Wednesday evening Vespers and any other feast day services called for during the week. A monthly Slavonic vespers and Liturgy are served as well as a monthly Liturgy in Spanish.

The Cathedral was blessed to host the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America earlier this year to honor His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri upon his retirement. His Eminence continues to be a wonderful presence at the Cathedral. He is spending most of his time writing his biblical commentaries.

The seven-year iconography project at the Cathedral is now ending with the narthex nearing completion and plans to enclose the current bell-tower creating an exo-narthex are underway.

St. Paul the Apostle Mission, Denison/Sherman. Founded 2003. Priest Michael Storozuk. Fr. Michael submitted the following: "We continue to be blessed by our Lord here at Saint Paul's.

Due to some vigorous growth at St Paul's at the beginning of August 2008 we began construction of our Activity Center which gives us a large assembly hall, classrooms, large kitchen and an office/cell for the priest. We built this 2550 sq.ft. building mostly ourselves with some outside subcontractor help.

On December 8th our parish Church and Activity Center took a direct hit by an EF1 tornado. This was confirmed by the National Weather Service. Damage to the buildings was minor with roofing shingles being blown off of the Church and areas of siding removed from the Activity Center. Unfortunately our brand new playground for the children was not so fortunate. It was completely demolished with the major portion lifted some 30 feet in the air over and through the trees and into a ravine on the back edge of our property. Our supply of building materials was strewn through the neighborhood. Many buildings in the same path were more severely damaged, some completely destroyed.

We were on a furious course to complete the Activity Center by Pascha and this effort completely drained the priest who was working 24/7 on the building. We finished the public areas of the inside and were able to use the building as we had hoped.

On Friday evening, April 10, 2009, Archbishop Dmitri came to serve the Presanctified Liturgy of Lazarus Saturday with us and to bless our newly constructed Activity Center which we named the St Herman of Alaska Activity Center and dedicated to our beloved Archbishop Dmitri.

Since the last assembly we have had two infant Baptisms, received by Chrismation two children, one adult, married one couple and made three catechumens. Our regular Sunday attendance now is about 28-38 which is up about 7-10 from last year.

As a parish we contribute food items to the local homeless shelter/food pantry and some of our members deliver for the meals-on-wheels program in town.

Unfortunately since November we were twice broken into. Both times nothing was disturbed (save the door jamb) or taken although cash was in plain sight. We are beginning to think that these thieves encountered the holy angels guarding our Church and retreated. We have taken measures to prevent these break-ins, although when someone wants in, they will get in, no matter what you do.

It seems the longer we have a presence in the community the more visitors we have. At least it appears now that most people in the area know that there is an Orthodox Church in town. This has brought to us additional inquirers which we are now nurturing.”

St. Maximus the Confessor Mission, Denton. Founded 2001. Priest Justin Frederick.
Additional information will be forth coming.

St. Barbara Mission, Ft. Worth. Founded 1978. Archpriest Basil Zebrun. Over the past few years St. Barbara's in Ft. Worth, Texas has experienced major community changes including, the purchase of property, construction of a new facility, and a relocation. On September 1, 2009 another significant change will take place: Fr. Basil Zebrun will become full time at St. Barbara's, leaving his position at the Diocesan Chancery Office where he has worked since July 1, 1997, and prior to that Bank of America. Financially this move will prove extremely challenging for the parish, at least in the beginning. The time is right, however, for this step to be taken. Given the make up of the parish, its membership's desire for further growth, and the potential that exists, it is hoped that Fr. Basil's full time presence in Ft. Worth will lead to significant progress. The change will also enable the community to move from mission to parish status. In other areas, St. Barbara's (1.) recently received into the fold a former and retired Episcopal priest who will enter the LVP, moving toward the diaconate, and the parish currently has four catechumens and two serious inquirers; (2.) will send a young family to St. Vladimir's Seminary this fall where the Reader David Wooten will study for the priesthood; (3.) hosted the St. Tikhon's Missionary Choir and the miraculous Sitka Icon on a Tuesday night and Wednesday morning with just over 100 people in attendance; (4.) is planning to host two lectures/retreats this fall, including one to be led by Fr. Thomas Hopko on the weekend of December fourth through the sixth; (5.) and is gearing up to host the 2010 Diocesan Pastoral Conference in February.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Houston. Founded 2005. Served by Deanery Clergy. The attendance has ranged from 40-60. *Additional information will be forth coming*

St. George the Great Martyr Church, Pharr/McAllen. Founded 1979. Priest Antonio Perdomo. Fr. Antonio submitted the following report:
Since the last Diocesan Assembly, St. George has received into the Church 2 adults through Chrismation, and 2 Children by Baptism. One adult and one child were received into the Church in Monterrey, Mexico at different times.
We now have 9 catechumens (6 adults and 3 children), with a potential for several more. The official Church membership is 40 adults. Even though we grew this year, some people also moved away. We maintained the current numbers by adding several new members. The average Sunday attendance this year has been 50 to 70.

The ongoing Fundraising Campaign for the hall continues to grow. Currently, we have about \$25,000.00 in the fund. This year St. George celebrated its 30th Anniversary. Archbishop Dmitri, Archpriest Joseph Fester and Milos Konjevic joined our celebration. It was a grace filled

weekend. Our guests encouraged the members to grow the Church, be missionary minded and move forward with the current proposed building project.

Food Pantry ministry continues to serve approximately 200 families every month. We received a grant from the OCA for \$8,000.00 to purchase a truck to help with the various ministries at St. George. A 2005 Dodge Ram pickup truck was purchased from grant funds as well as several other donations given for that purpose. The Food Pantry Program distributed approximately 150 turkeys for Thanksgiving and during the Nativity season. Christmas stockings from the OCA, clothing, coats, school supplies, blankets and food boxes were also shared in a special Nativity distribution.

One Priest, two counselors and three youths from St. George's participated in this year's very inspiring St. Peter the Aleut Camp at Grady Spruce YMCA Camp in N. Texas.

Our 4th Annual Winter Service Retreat for Youth & Young Adults was a huge success. The spiritual topic was, "Finding and Living Our Calling in Christ." Approx. 50 attended, including clergy, high school aged teens, college students, young adults and chaperones. The week included talks by George Dahdouh, Pastor at St. Elias Orthodox Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) and Fr. Basil Biberdorf (OCA) both from Houston, Texas. Retreat attendees represented the OCA, ROCOR, Greek and Antiochian Churches. Other activities included a project at Casa Amparo orphanage in Mexico, serving in the food pantry, and glorious ending with the Divine Liturgy served in Spanish. Orthodox Youth and a Seminarian from Mexico also participate.

Last winter, Fr. Antonio assisted and brought a Spanish-language representative Choir from St. George to assist at the Enthronement of Bishop Alejo in Mexico.

Missionary trips to Monterrey, Mexico continue, with other possibilities opening up in Reynosa, Nuevo Progreso and Nuevo Laredo all in Mexico. Assistance to Casa Amparo Orphanage for girls in Reynosa also continues.

We hosted an Orthodox Summer Intern, Christopher Chatfield, a Michigan college student.

An OCMC and IOCC Missionary visited our Parish to learn about our outreach work and ministries.

St. George continues disseminating information about the Orthodox Church in Spanish. This year, churches have been assisted in Mexico, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Paraguay and Costa Rica just to name a few. Fr. Antonio also participated in a Missionary trip to Guatemala. The bookstore has a supply of Spanish books available. St. George website has thousands of visitors every month who are looking for orthodox information in Spanish. See: www.stgeorgepantry.org

St. Sava Mission, Plano. Founded 1988. Priest Seraphim Hipsh. By the Grace of God and through the prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos, St. Sava, Archbishop of Serbia, and His

Eminence, Archbishop DMITRI, St. Sava's continues to seek to be a light to the cities of Plano and Allen, TX. This past year has seen steady growth within the community both numerically and spiritually. We have maintained a consistent liturgical schedule, and we have worked to strengthen our church school program and put in place a youth program. For a period of about 6 months, we employed an additional individual to focus on youth and church school ministry. The results were outstanding; however, because of budget shortfalls, we had to terminate that program. Our choir continues to improve through regular rehearsals and consistent liturgical participation. We sold 3 acres to increase cash flow for our building program. In the coming year, the main focus will be moving to our new property, fundraising and those things necessary for the construction of our temple. The building program has taken longer than anticipated. As a consequence, our hope is to begin construction by the fall of 2010 / spring of 2011. The council has been meeting weekly since June of 2009 and the anticipation is that we will be moving into a renovated building on the property and have the final approval for the floor plan so that we can begin the construction drawings.

St. Anthony the Great Church, San Antonio. Founded 1979. Priest Leo Poore and Priest Thomas Ledford. The parish has seen a slow but steady growth this past year. We have received four adults into the parish, though either baptism or chrismation, two infant baptism and two weddings have occurred. We have at this time three catechumens. We are continuing to work with the Catholic Worker House in taking care of those in need. We are in the progress of organizing the events for our 30th anniversary of the parish. We were informed this past week that the wall icons, Nativity of our Lord and Theophany will be ready to be installed by the end of August. The Sisterhood and Brotherhood continue to be active and supportive of the needs of the parish.

St John Damascus, Tyler. Reactivated in 2006. Priest John Mikita. *Additional information will be forth coming.*