

Atlanta Deanery Report Diocesan Assembly – July 16, 2012

St. Mary of Egypt Orthodox Church, Norcross, GA Fr. Peter Smith

Over this past year, as have all of us to one extent or another, we have placed a premium on staying the course at home and concentrating on Mission work near home. Fr. Dimitri Oselinsky has faithfully pastored our Mission in Montgomery, Alabama. They have modestly grown in numbers, but the faithful have indeed grown in their commitment and attention to their work. They recently received the mother of one of their members by Baptism, bringing another soul closer to Christ. Fr. Thomas Alessandrone serves another of our "children" at the Mission in Gainesville, Ga. They meet twice a month and share the facilities of the First Baptist Church of Gainesville. They have brought Orthodoxy to the North Georgia area along with the Orthodox project begun in Rome, Ga. In cooperation with the St. Elizabeth Carpatho-Russian Church in Woodstock, we bring four catechumens of St. Mary's into the beginnings of what will be a Pan-Orthodox community - now composed of Carpatho-Russian, Greek, Antiochian and OCA faithful. In addition, our members on the west side of town host faithful visitors to the St. Basil Orthodox Outreach Center in Marietta for Saturday evening Reader Vespers, fellowship and hospitality. This was blessed by His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah 3 years ago. Our prayers are always with all of these activities from St. Mary of Egypt.

We have had 13 Baptisms during this past year, and presently have 6 catechumens and 4 inquirers, many of whom attend our Tuesday evening class at a local Starbucks Coffee House. Taylor Hostetter is our Catechist - along with his immense architectural expertise, property maintenance and growing number of local contacts with the Gwinnett County Departments of Traffic, Property and Zoning.

Recently, Hieromonk Cyprian and Taylor spent 10 days on Mount Athos and in Serbia. While in Serbia, Taylor brought several canvases to our "iconographer" for the icons which will become the intense and wonderful iconography to grace our future Worship Temple. Our ever-present joy is the community's warmth and abiding spirit both in Worship and Fellowship.

We have had the warm presence of His Grace Bishop Mark with us on several occasions and are blessed to have had the opportunity of having Abbot Gerasim serve with us over the June 30/July 1 weekend. The future is very bright in Norcross, Georgia!!

St. John the Wonderworker Parish , Atlanta, GA

Fr. Jacob Myers

The Greatest news of this year for our parish is that we now own our Church. We were able to pay off the debt by the Feast Day of St. Nicholas in December 2011. This is an extreme blessing to us. We continue to have new people come to the church all the time. We had 7 catechumens enter the Orthodox Church on Holy Saturday and be Chrismated. After Pascha, 7-10 new catechumens have come forth to learn about our Church. We have had 5 births in the past year, and three marriages in May and June.

Our web site continues to bring people to our church. We put new pictures of our events up at least each week and often twice in the week. Operating under the assumption that no one returns to a web site that is not constantly renewed, we strive for a continual fresh look at the site each time a person chooses to view it. We video record our pastors sermons which go up each week on the site, as do any talks given at the church or in the city of Atlanta by Orthodox. Two weeks ago Father Peter Heers, the editor of the new book, ELDER PAISIUS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN, came to give a talk and sell the book. We had 90 people from all over the city, including about 10 Orthodox priests, who attended a dinner at our church with Father Peter and then stayed for the talk. We have a very close knit clergy association. Our pastor, Father Jacob is the president of the association, and all of our clergy meetings of the past year have been at St. Johns, which includes a lunch following the meeting. We have a particular philosophy gleaned in our clergy association that we try to meet as a body of priests with any Orthodox speaker who comes to Atlanta for our spiritual growth. If the person is an author, the clergy association has bought their book for all the priests of the city. Hence we are all reading the same thing and discussing it together.

We continue to serve Divine Liturgy 4 times a week throughout the year, and every day in the Fasts of the Church, serving Matins and Vespers every week day. This year saw our catechist, Gabriel Aldridge ordained a deacon. It is a great blessing for our pastor as Gabriel comes to most of the services and is a great help.

Our Loaves and Fishes Food Program continues to be supported by all the Orthodox of Atlanta, who pour money and food into the program which serves the poor a meal twice a day, Monday through Friday. Our St. Nicholas Orthodox School is about ready for a new principal. Pamela Showalter, who has had the job for 15 years is retiring, and we believe that Edna King, greatly experience in this area (and a member of our church) will be taking over.

We continue to keep the church in great shape, keeping totally up to date on repairs and renovations. We plan in the next month to put our heating and air-

conditioning systems on line so that they can be turned on and off from home if need be.

We have been very blessed this year. Thanks be to God....

St. Mary Magdalene Church, Rincon, GA
Fr. Hieromonk James (Bohlman)

The current membership is: 43 adults, 2 Catechumens, and 8 children, for a total membership of 53.

The parish owns 2 acres of land, upon which sits the doublewide that serves as the Parish Hall and Residence of the Priest. On the land also are 3 storage sheds, a large picnic pavilion, a 24'x24' storage building currently under construction, and the church consecrated in 2007 (roughly 34 feet by 80 feet).

Functioning in the parish are 1 Rector, 1 Deacon, 2 Readers, and 2 Choir Directors.

Two women in the parish function as the Vestment Guild, making and repairing liturgical vestments and church hangings.

The Prospora and Litiya guild is composed of 2 individuals who keep the parish supplied for the services and special events.

Landscaping and development of the parish grounds is under the guidance of one of the men of the parish who has taken on this charge of service to the parish.

The parish tithes faithfully to the Diocese each month.

October 2012 will see the parish's Fifth Annual Russian Festival, an event that draws approximately 400+ visitors from 3 states.

The parish membership has been divided into four Food Teams and each Sunday a Food Team supplies the parish and our visitors with a full meal for Fellowship.

Approximately 6 years ago a Sisterhood was blessed to form, and acts in a philanthropic role on behalf of the parish. Two years ago a Brotherhood was blessed to form and has taken over making various repairs to the parish buildings, supplying the parish and our visitors with a meal on months containing a 5th Sunday, and is contemplating various ways of representing the parish in the area.

Each Sunday of Orthodoxy the parish celebrates with the Greek parish of Savannah, the two parishes alternating the site of the celebration between the two parishes.

For the past 5 years the parish has participated in a potluck supper with the local Roman Catholic Church, Methodist churches, and Lutheran churches for the Roman "Week of Christian Unity". In addition, our parish participates weekly in collecting food donations for a local Food Pantry.

The parish has a "Traveling Icon" which is committed into the care of one of our families for a period of two weeks, at the end of which period the Icon is brought back to the church and then committed into the care of another of our families. During the course of a year and a half the Icon travels to all of our parish households. The Icon serves as a source of consolation, an encouragement to prayer, and an inspiration for each household's love of God.

Submitted by Father James (Bohlman), Rector, St. Mary Magdalene Church, Rincon, GA

Sts. Constantine and Helen Mission, Helena, GA

The current membership is: 9 adults, 1 Catechumen and 1 child, for a total membership of 11.

There is 1 Reader functioning in the mission.

The mission owns 2 acres of land, upon which sits the doublewide that serves as the chapel, the Fellowship hall, and classrooms.

The mission is currently searching for a used doublewide which the mission will then refurbish and which will be able to function as a residence for a long-hoped-for Priest of their own. The mission is seeking and requesting a Priest of its own so that the mission might be able to participate in the full cycle of liturgical services and have access to all of the sacraments.

Once a month Rev. Hieromonk James (Bohlman) and Reader Deacon Vassily, of St. Mary Magdalene Church, Rincon, GA, come to the mission for Confessions, the Divine Liturgy, instructions in the Faith and the Parish Council meeting. The mission also meets on Sundays and Wednesdays for Reader's services and Choir practice.

The Mission members tithe faithfully to the mission, enabling it to pay all of its bills as well as to accrue a slight financial reserve. The mission also faithfully tithes to the Diocese each month.

Submitted by Rev. Hieromonk James (Bohlman)

St. Innocent Orthodox Church, Macon, GA
Fr. Theophan Buck

St. Innocent has had many blessings on our community over this past year. Our attendance has been steady at around 30-40ppl and we have a steady trickle of visitors and repeat visitors every week. This past Lent we were blessed to host a well-attended retreat with Fr. John Breck on reading the Scriptures Spiritually. During Lent Fr. Theophan offered weekly classes after the Liturgy on the fall and redemption. Our prison ministry at Central State Prison has grown to around 12 regular attendees. Recently, one of the inmates was Chrismated and another became a Catechumen. Although our OCF ministry has been largely dormant this past year, Fr. Theophan has continued to be invited to the local colleges to give classes on Orthodoxy.

It seems we are always busy planning for the future of our parish. This year we formed an Outreach Committee to brainstorm and implement ideas to elevate our profile and to begin to evangelize our local area. Recently we published our new website which is easier to manage and therefore will be more current. We have begun to record all guest speakers and sermons to offer them on our website and our Facebook page. We are in the process of planning our annual Barbeque and Bible event this coming October with Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon speaking on the Orthodox view of salvation. Last year we served 200, this year we are praying for more.

St. Luke Orthodox Mission, Anniston, AL
Fr. Basil Henry

We give thanks to God for His mercy and blessings upon our Mission here in Anniston, Alabama over the past year. Interest in our community has continued to grow as new faces join us in worship. This year we baptized and chrismated nine new faithful who immediately went to work in helping out with various facets of church life. I have been delighted at the Holy Altar as my staff of servers has increased from one to now five on a typical Sunday. We currently have three catechumens and a number of inquirers. Our number of communicants has arisen above forty. Even with two new picnic tables in our courtyard, our coffee hour is so energetic, that sometimes, it is difficult to hear each other. And it is a testimony of the joy in our church family that most stay for a long time after Liturgy to fellowship.

We have a consistent emphasis on daily prayer and gathering for services throughout the week. Therefore we typically have services or a class on six out of seven days of the week. Our Wednesday night class is an in-depth study of the Book of Acts. Upon completion, we will follow through into a study of the

works of the Apostolic Fathers and the character of the Early Church as exemplified in their works. We are in the process of developing service material to begin celebrating Matins on Sundays.

Our celebration of Holy Week this year was profoundly affected by a magnificent new Cross and Corpus of Christ! In addition, a sister parish in Pennsylvania, donated a beautiful and venerable Epitaphios for our veneration at Christ's tomb. The extensive generosity of Pascha flower donations became part of new landscaping around the exterior church grounds. We just received anonymous funding to purchase a complete set of matching gold robes for our altar servers.

We continue our outreach to the surrounding community and to nearby Jacksonville State University and ask your prayers for our labors in this little corner of The Lord's Vineyard.

Glory to God for all things.

St. Gregory Church – Tuscaloosa, AL

Fr. Demetrius Edwards

Saint Gregory's, in Moundville, Alabama, continues working on the new chapel. The main structure has been completed; with our first service on November 27, 2011. Work on the iconostas has been an ongoing project adding two new panel to our existing Iconostas: with a third tear is being planned, with construction beginning in July 2012. The Icons of St. Xenia and St. Nicholas will adorn our two new panels, which have been donated and are in the process of being completed.

Work is being performed on the new kitchen, to make it a commercial grade to allowing us to serve foods to the public.

St Gregory's is blessed to have a wonderful book store, with many items from Russia, Romania, and Greece. Hand make icons and much more.

Located on 25 minutes from the University of Alabama campus, we still encourage the Orthodox students to attend service while they are away from home.

At this point our parish is regional with some people driving as far as 60 to 100 miles which mean most of our attendance for Saturday Vespers and Sunday Liturgy.

Last year, St. Gregory received 6 new Catechumens: after one year in depth study into the Orthodox Faith, each one made their commitment to the church on Lazarus Saturday. Five of the catechumens were received thru Holy Baptism and Chrismation, one a former Roman Catholic was received thru Holy Chrismation.

We also welcomed two new infants thru Holy Baptism and Holy Chrismation

We continue to have visitor from other Orthodox Churches during visits to friend and family in the Tuscaloosa area; we also have visitor that come to services as they travel thru Alabama.

Please continue to pray for Saint Gregory's!

Holy Myrrhbearers Mission - Montgomery, AL **Father Dimitri Oselinsky**

The members of Holy Myrrhbearers Mission meet every weekend for liturgical services. I serve the mission two weekends a month. On the weekends that I am there, Great Vespers is served on Saturday evening and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. Other weekends Readers Service is conducted by the mission members.

Services are conducted at an Episcopal Chapel on the grounds of Holy Cross Parochial School. We have total use of the chapel on weekends because Episcopal services are only conducted on weekdays when the children have classes. We have recently acquired two folding screens that improvise an iconostas. We are looking into purchasing four more icons that will complete this iconostas. Presently we have the icons of Jesus Christ and the Holy Theotokos.

Presently the mission has 11 adult members and two children: William and Shannon Thompson, Natalia Henderson, Kestra Mary Childers, James Day, Gregory and Helen Hovanic, Gabriel and Erika Anderson with their children William and Ella, Angela Christina Parks, and Art Nichols. Angela Parks' mother will be chrismated on my first visit to the mission in June. Thus adult membership will increase to 12.

Visitors to the mission are David Penden, Andrew Brashier, Deborah Freeman, Katya Kobeleva, and Norman Carr.

I always look forward to my visits with these dedicated people. They have a compelling zeal for Holy Orthodoxy and faithfully participate in all of the liturgical services of the mission. Some even have a 45 minute drive to get to the mission.

We ask your holy prayers for our continuing journey for God's glory and our salvation.

In Christ our Lord,
Father Dimitri Oselinsky

St. Symeon the New Theologian Church, Birmingham, AL
Fr. Alexander Fecanin

This past year we have seen continued steady growth with 10 new adult converts and 7 child Baptisms since the last Assembly.

We have over 50 children in the Church School program and 20 young men who serve in the altar at various times.

The community is in the initial stages of a building program that will hopefully lead to the construction of a new temple at the current site. We celebrate our 35th Anniversary in October 2012.

Fr. Ignatius Crockett (retired status) ably assists in the liturgical services with improved health, along with Fr. Deacon Ephraim Rivers.

Charity programs include helping the needy at the door of the church in an urban setting, as well as helping the unemployed and working poor within our own community.

A tornado relief team worked last summer after the April 2011 tornados. Again, individual members gave assistance to neighbors after the January 2012 tornados. The Parish had a collection for a specific neighbor of a member whose home was devastated.

We hope to produce another choir recording before the summer is out.

Deanery Report submitted by Fr. Alexander Fecanin.

Glory to God for all things!