

# **.Southcentral (Dallas) Deanery Report 2013**

Respectfully Submitted:

Fr. Basil Zebrun

## **Introduction and Overview:**

The Southcentral (Dallas) Deanery continues as the largest Deanery of the Diocese of the South. Encompassing six states, its 613,500 square miles totals almost two thirds of the territory covered by the entire Diocese. The Deanery includes: Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Within its border is the Diocesan Cathedral of St. Seraphim of Sarov in Dallas, as well as the oldest OCA community in the South, that of Sts. Cyril and Methodius in Hartshorne, Oklahoma, founded in 1897. Regarding the latter, with the help of a visitor's genealogical research efforts, the parish metrical records from 100 years ago have been digitized for easier and more permanent storage. Additionally the original blue prints of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church were discovered in the bell tower, which may prove to be a useful resource for missions entering a building program.

Currently there are 22 active parishes, missions, or mission stations in the Deanery. Recent efforts in New Orleans promise to yield fruit. A small group near central Louisiana, that drive over 100 miles each Sunday to Shreveport, Beaumont or Lake Charles for Liturgy, have expressed an interest in a mission in Alexandria. Fr. Jason Foster is exploring the possibilities in that particular city.

Because of its considerable territory, and because the number of active communities is at least twice that of other Deaneries, the suggestion has been made more than once to add new Deaneries within our borders. Discussions continue as how best to make this happen. This will undoubtedly be a future topic of consideration after the election of a Diocesan hierarchy.

This past year we were saddened by the repose of two long time missionaries of the Diocese and the Southcentral Deanery: Archpriest George Sondergaard (Albuquerque, NM) and Priest Martin LeBrecht (Dallas, TX). Both were beloved friends of His Eminence and of many people in the South. Their presence, pastoral sensibilities and sense of humor will be greatly missed. May their memory be eternal!

One of the most notable events continuing within our Deanery borders is of course, the construction of His Eminence's final resting place at St. Seraphim Cathedral. The parish broke ground on May 11, 2012 for the Archbishop Dmitri Memorial Chapel, and progress continues as final approvals by the city have been given. The hope is that by next year His Eminence will be brought home. People may help with construction costs by contacting Mr. Milos Konjevich the

Diocesan Treasurer, or by simply mailing designated funds to the, Diocese of the South, c/o Archbishop Dmitri Chapel, P.O. Box 191109, Dallas, Texas 75219.

We are blessed to have enthusiastic, mission minded clergy within the Southcentral Deanery, as well as dedicated laymen who help with the growth of their respective parishes. The following is a synopsis of some of the activities taking place within our communities, as submitted by their respective priests.

*(Some final summaries are pending, due to the early request for reports. These will posted as they are received.)*

### **All Saints Mission**

#### **Victoria, Texas**

#### **Archpriest Dimitri Cozby**

The most significant event in the last year was the installation of our iconostas last June. The icons were painted by Fr Jerome Sanderson, of Nashville, Indiana; his son carved the iconostas. We received good coverage in the local newspaper, the "*Victoria Advocate*". Our Pascha services were also covered by the local paper.

We have been visited twice in the last year by confirmation classes from local Methodist churches. Both groups attended our Wednesday evening daily Vespers, with a presentation and question-and-answer period afterward.

A number of Eritreans have begun to attend services. They are an interesting contribution to parish life. The mission is very diverse ethnically. We have the usual mix of American-born converts and cradle Orthodox, plus parishioners born in Greece, Russia, Syria, Moldova, Ukraine, Romania Mexico and Iraq, in addition to Eritrea.

We have had two infant baptisms during the last year, one of them an Eritrean baby. We also had one adult baptism and an adult chrismation, both converts from the Lutheran confession. We currently have one catechumen. We also celebrated two weddings in 2013, one of them being the blessing of a couple previously married civilly.

Parish membership, however, remains level. Our gains are offset by people moving from the area, and the death of an elderly parishioner over the winter.

### **All Saints of North America Orthodox Church**

#### **Albuquerque, New Mexico**

### **Priest Nikolay Miletkov**

On Bright Wednesday, May 8<sup>th</sup> 2013 our beloved Pastor Emeritus and founder of All Saints of NA, Archpriest George Sondergaard, fell asleep in the Lord. Fr George was a great man! Many saw in him the virtues of Archbishop Dmitri. Indeed, Fr George was a man of great humility, meekness, gentleness, and love for his flock and all people. May Fr. George's Memory be eternal, and may we have his intercessions before the throne of God!

All Saints of North America currently has 80 pledging members. The average Sunday attendance is around 100. The parish is a good mix of people from all ages. More than half of our parishioners are converts. Since last year (summer of 2012) we have received 7 souls into the Orthodox Church.

This past year we added to our weekly schedule a Thursday morning Liturgy, and a continuing education class on Friday mornings.

We continue to serve Daily Vespers on Wednesdays followed by the Orthodoxy Class for Inquirers and Catechumens. The Divine Liturgy in Slavonic is also celebrated once a month on a Saturday.

Fr Nikolay Miletkov and Fr Conan Gill (the local Greek Orthodox Priest) continue to meet weekly as they work together with the UNM OCF. All the Orthodox clergy in the state of New Mexico get together once a month for fellowship and discussion.

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012 we had a Special Parish Meeting on which it was unanimously decided that our future Church building will be built on our current property. This decision enabled us to move forward to the design phase of our Building Campaign.

### **St. Andrew of Crete Mission**

#### **New Orleans, Louisiana**

In 2012 and 2013, the mission met 7 times for worship and fellowship near the Tulane campus. Regrettably, attendance and financial support are currently insufficient to continue with the mission. Services are suspended for the time being. However, there are several people who would like to revive the OCA mission in New Orleans. The mission was originally founded in 1977.

### **St. Anthony the Great (pending)**

#### **San Antonio, Texas**

**Archpriest Leo Poore**

### **St. Barbara Orthodox Church**

#### **Ft. Worth, Texas**

**Archpriest Basil Zebrun**

The St. Barbara community has occupied its current 6400 square foot all purpose building since December of 2006. The parish has its eye on future construction of a traditional temple on the east side of its 3 acre lot. Towards this end, construction and parishioner friendly loans are being paid down as funds become available. Significant progress was made in this area during 2012 and 2013. Minor improvements to the existing structure, both inside and out, have been seen recently. Fr. Basil has been full time at the parish since September of 2009.

Thus far for 2013, the parish has averaged 91 people per Sunday Divine Liturgy. Having received a number of people into the Church during the past nine months, we currently have 1 catechumen and several serious inquirers. In addition, Orthodox who have moved to DFW have added to parish growth and to the dynamics of the community.

Adult and older teen classes are held each Wednesday after Vespers, as well as classes on "*The Eucharist*" Saturday afternoon prior to Great Vespers. For the former Fr. Thomas Hopko's series on Orthodoxy is used as a guide; for the latter, Fr. Alexander Schmemmann's book, "*The Eucharist*." Church School for children is conducted on the 2nd Saturday of each month during the school year, with an emphasis on integrating children more fully into the liturgical life of the Church, and on providing parents with information and encouragement for restoring the home as a primary center for religious instruction.

Saturday Vespers and Sunday Liturgies also form part of the regular weekly worship cycle. Once a month General Confessions are done as an extra time for personal repentance and as a means of instruction.

Thus far during 2012 and 2013, 16 adults and/or children have been received into the Church, and we have celebrated 2 weddings. During 2012 and 2013 three members of our parish received Doctorates, one received his Master of Divinity and was ordained to the Priesthood, and three members graduated with Bachelor degrees in various fields of study.

Each August our community participates in the Texas Christian University (TCU) Church Fair. Two major festivals are conducted each year at our parish (*Spring and Fall*), in addition to post Pascha Pysanky Classes open to the public, with the dual goal of raising funds and introducing the neighborhood to Orthodox Christianity. Last Fall the parish hosted Fr. David Rucker from the OCMC who gave two presentations. In October and November, on Tuesday nights, a seven week series was offered to members and to the public. It was entitled, "*Beginning to Pray*," and used as a guide Metropolitan Anthony Bloom's classis work bearing the same name. This Spring St. Barbara's hosted a Friday evening portion of a "*God and Children*" Conference sponsored by North Texas Orthodox Churches. Speakers included various local clergy. In addition a local outreach lecture was conducted during Lent in honor of His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri. It was entitled: "*The Vulnerability of the Incarnation: God made Man*." Our guest speaker was Rev. Dr. Sergius Halvorsen from St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary. Both he and Fr. Marcus Burch led discussions, as well, during a weekend Deanery meeting at St. Barbara's.

The Annual Parish Picnic each Summer continues to be a highlight of the year, and has become a valuable social event, affording parishioners, catechumens and their family members the opportunity to know one another outside of a typical parish setting. Similarly, the Annual Nativity Eve Parish Holy Supper and the January Chili Cookoff have become highly anticipated events. Both activities see participation by parishioners and non-Orthodox.

## **St. Basil the Great Mission**

### **Weatherford, OK**

#### **Priest Nicklas Aiello**

St. Basil the Great Mission currently has a dozen members. However since almost half of them live over an hour away, our Sunday attendance is usually at about six. I have one catechumen - the same one I've had for a year; he lives 2 hrs from here and works on weekends so he's not been able to progress. I have one inquirer I've been meeting with for several months, but lately our Wed. night inquirers class has picked up. We now have between 4 and 8 who attend.

Weatherford is a college town (Southwestern Oklahoma State University) of about 16K with the students and 12K without them during the summer. With SWOSU in the city there is some financial and employment stability. The main non-university source is the Natural Gas industry. Weatherford is within driving distance of many other communities - so the total number of people the mission can serve is closer to 45K.

The religious demographic of Weatherford and the surrounding areas is about 60% Baptist, 10% Methodist and 10% Mennonite (although their influence is significant being the first ones to settle this area). The majority of the rest are Evangelical and Pentecostal - and a few % Roman Catholic.

The nearest Orthodox presence is Oklahoma City 85 miles away. Within the OKC metro area are large Antiochian and Greek parishes and as well as smaller ROCOR and Ukrainian parishes. I have good relations with all of them.

We have one woman who is a core part of our mission, but other than her we have no others who are - or will be - anytime soon. We receive enough in support from the members every month to pay our bills but I draw no support from the mission as yet, and do not see myself doing so in this next year. We are supported completely from my wife's nursing salary. ...which frankly is inadequate. I am currently exploring ways to support us for a couple years while she attends Nurse Practitioner training in Jan. 2014.

Demographically we are adults in our mid 40's to early 60's (men and women equally) with two in their early 20's. All SW Oklahoma Caucasians except one member who is Lebanese. However we currently also have an African American inquirer; which is exciting because, as I mentioned last year, there are Native and African American and Mexican communities within our area that I very much want to reach.

My emphasis is the therapy of the church as it is expressed in the local parish. That being the case I offer Matins and Vespers almost every day during the week and the Divine Liturgy usually during the week (in addition to Sunday of course).

In terms of community outreach I have volunteered doing visitation at an elderly care facility 2 days a week (2 hrs. at a time) and have just been promoted to 'volunteer chaplain' with the facility. I am still hoping to do prison visitation and in the Fall hope to open an OSF chapter at SWOSU. I have a faculty advisor and a larger club that will sponsor us if we don't meet the school requirements of ten members - which we will almost certainly not. (There are currently no Orthodox students at the university aside from my daughter).

I am also planning to have Fr. Constantine Nasr do another seminar on the Christians of Palestine through the university as last February's event was **very** successful (we had 30 members of the community and about the same number of students attend).

I've also been interviewed by our local paper and via pod cast with a local web designer. See my website for details. [www.saintbasil.org](http://www.saintbasil.org)

My plan for physical expansion is no longer to purchase a double-wide mobile home for a chapel and purchase land and build a temple as we have the resources - converting the chapel to a fellowship hall when the temple is completed.

That scenario will cost (in total) a minimum of \$300,000 in this area. Since that writing I have found 4000 sq.ft. church buildings (the size we need for sanctuary and fellowship hall), with property and parking, in the \$150,000 to \$200,000. All within the city rather than out of town - as was the case with the mobile home option.

### **Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church**

**McComb, Mississippi**

**Priest Benedict Crawford**

Christ the Saviour Orthodox Church was established in 2004, a "daughter" parish of Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church in Clinton, Mississippi. At this time our total membership (including those at the Hattiesburg Mission) is 41 adults and 30 children. Our average Sunday attendance is around 25 adults and around 15 children. For Saturday Vespers we typically have 7 adults and 8 children. Our usual schedule of services is: Saturday, Vespers 6:00 pm. Sunday, Matins 8:30; Divine Liturgy 10:00 am. Wednesday, Small Compline or Molieben, 6:00 pm. We also have a breakfast study group currently meeting twice a week. In the past year we have celebrated 5 Baptisms and 1 Chrismation.

Once a month the Divine Liturgy is served in Hattiesburg for the benefit of our members there. Reader Vespers is served every Friday evening. The Hattiesburg Mission Station has around 19 adults and 11 children. We expect further growth in Hattiesburg in the coming months.

Although the past year has seen two local residents join our parish, we remain largely a “long-distance” parish for most of our parishioners. One member drives about two hours each Sunday to attend Liturgy. About one third of our parishioners live within a half hour drive.

This year we celebrated our second annual “Greek Festival.” In addition to being a fundraising event, this is intended as a good way to help local residents to learn about our parish and about the Orthodox Church, tour the church, and generally be aware that we are here and friendly. We are now completing a much-needed project to install a concrete sidewalk to connect the church with the parish hall.

## **St. Cyril of Jerusalem Orthodox Church**

**The Woodlands (Houston) Texas**

**Hieromonk John (Anderson)**

As of March 1, 2013, Hieromonk John (Anderson) was officially assigned as the priest-in-charge of St. Cyril Orthodox Church in The Woodlands (Houston), Texas. In the months since his assignment there has been growth, healing, and a renewal of spirit. Fr. John has settled in to his new home and is pleased to be serving the Lord in His Vineyard in The Woodlands.

In March, Fr. John, together with the St. Cyril mission parish council, reinstated monthly council meetings. We have begun re-establishing and conforming our whole structure to the by-laws of the Diocese of the South, as well as the guidelines and statutes of Orthodox Church in America. Since Fr. John arrived, we held our Annual Mission Meeting in March. Fr. John asked the blessing of Archbishop Nikon to appoint our current mission parish council.

Since 2012, unfortunate happenings took place that could have greatly disrupted St. Cyril's. Thankfully, the people of St. Cyril's have been humble and resilient in the face of great temptation. They have persevered and the Lord has rewarded their faithfulness. Fr. John has given great attention to the individual members of the mission, especially in terms of pastoral care, allowing members to voice or work through any pain that may have been received in the last two years. Thankfully, the mission received their new priest with love and contentment, and we are working together enthusiastically. Thanks be to God for a good fit. There continues to be great healing, and progress among the people, glory to God! We are moving forward, keeping our eyes on the Lord.

Since March we have grown by five families. We have nearly 75 individual members in our mission. In addition, our tithing levels have increased since March. Thanks be to God we have more and more members stepping up into leadership roles, and into service in our mission. We anticipate more growth, especially due to the local population boom in The Woodlands.

Exxon Mobil, is moving its national headquarters to The Woodlands, which will bring upwards of 30,000 people to the area. This doesn't include a number of other international businesses moving to The Woodlands as well, including: Anadarko, Chevron Phillips, Maersk Line, among others, which is literally going to increase the populations by tens of thousands. This is good

news for our community and for our mission to bring Christ and the Orthodox faith to a world in need.

Currently, St. Cyril's is renting its worship space. We meet on Hope Pointe Anglican Church's property: specifically in the old Hope Pointe Anglican facility. Hope Pointe continues to be a warm and gracious host. We continue to have to schedule in advance our worship times, and activities. In addition, we are called upon to set up and put away everything that would typically be located in the nave and narthex. Thankfully, the altar area and the iconostasis is permanently set up. Needless to say, we are anxious to acquire our own property and to build.

The community of St. Cyril's has desired to buy property and build for several years. We are pleased to report that we are currently in dialogue with a property owner that is interested in selling, as well as with a real estate agent. We currently meet with the property owner monthly to discuss and negotiate purchase of a property in The Woodlands.

Addressing the need for healing, as well as a stable life in the Church, has been a high priority. Thus, we have gradually reintroduced regular services and activities: we currently have four regular times of worship: Wednesday night Vespers, Friday night Akathist Hymn, Saturday night Adult Ed followed by Great Vespers and confession, and Sunday morning Hours and Divine Liturgy, followed by our Agape Meal.

Fr. John has begun outings with the youth of the parish, and is encouraging their desire to form a more structured and active youth group. In addition to regular pastoral visitations, Fr. John has been meeting with the parishioners and has gotten to know each one of the flock. Beginning in June we will have a monthly altar server/reader workshop, which we hope will be a catalyst to starting a men's fellowship group.

We are currently worshipping in Orthodox fashion twice a month at two of the local senior living centers in The Woodlands. This has proven to be a great benefit to the elders who worship with us, as well as to our community as a whole.

We participate in the local Houston area Orthodox Clergy Association, which meets regularly. Most of the clergy gathered at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church for Metropolitan Isaiah's visitation, on the Feast of the Annunciation. In addition, many of the local priests gathered and celebrated the Radonitsa on May 14th, at a local cemetery with a pan-Orthodox section.

Fr. John has continued connecting, especially to the other nearby local Orthodox Churches and their priests: Fr. Anthony at St. Anthony's, Antiochian. Fr. John Whiteford at St. Jonah's, ROCOR. And Fr. George Dahdouh at St. Elias, ROCOR. Since our communities are close in size, we are assisting when possible in each others events. Example: St. Anthony's is hosting a pan-Orthodox Vacation Bible School, and Fr. Anthony has invited Hieromonk John, and the other priests, to take Orthodox effort in Houston, lacking the "spirit of competition." Thanks be to God!



All in all, St. Cyril's is moving forward with thanksgiving and with enthusiasm. We thank the Diocese for its support and love during the trials and in this new era of our life. We ask the blessing and prayers of Vladika Nikon, as well as all the clergy and people of the Diocese of the South.

## **Ss. Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Church**

### **Hartshorne, Oklahoma**

#### **Priest Ambrose Arrington/Deacon Steven Kroll**

Ss. Cyril and Methodius Church in Hartshorne, Oklahoma, remains in a holding pattern with no priest in residence. Fr. Ambrose Arrington travels from Bixby once a month to serve a Saturday Liturgy for the faithful there. The facilities include a sturdy, beautiful church building, a parish hall/community center, and a rectory. Of the three buildings, only the rectory is in need of extensive repair. There are six remaining members, who are intensely dedicated to the Church. In January of 2013, Dn. Steven Kroll of St. Seraphim Cathedral began traveling up from Dallas to concelebrate with Fr. Ambrose, which has been a source of encouragement for the community. With the help of a visitor doing genealogical research, the parish metrical records from 100 years ago have been digitized for easier and more permanent storage. The original blue prints were also discovered in the bell tower, which may prove to be a useful resource for missions entering into a building program. With a resident priest, this could be turned into a functioning parish or monastic community. It is in a rural setting, but only 15 miles from McAlester, Oklahoma, a town of almost 18,000 and the largest in the Choctaw Nation. Outreach to ethnic Orthodox Christians, as well as to the local populace, would likely bear fruit.

## **St. Dimitri of Rostov Mission**

### **Los Alamos, NM (*Pending*)**

## **St. George Orthodox Church**

### **Pharr, Texas**

#### **Priest Antonio Perdomo**

Since the last Diocesan Assembly, St. George has received into the Church 1 adult through Chrismation, and 2 Children by Baptism. One marriage also occurred at St. George's.

The official Church membership is 60 adults. We seem to be challenged in a similar manner as many of our Churches; we grow every year but at the same time many our parishioners move away. Fortunately, more people are staying than moving and thus we continue to grow. Last year we had attendance of approximately 50-70 on a Sunday. This year we seem to have settled at approximately 50. Our temple fits about 50 comfortably which brings up the question whether we need a bigger space to accommodate more people in the temple? This is a subject that will need further contemplation from our members in the future.

We have been blessed this past year in so many ways. Our space has doubled and so has our budget. We have been challenged but somehow God has provided and we have been able to pay the bills and continue to function and grow.

St. George's new hall is now fully functioning with the completion of the commercial kitchen. Even though there are always projects to complete the hall and kitchen are fully functional and operating. This hall has been in use for a full year now. It has been a real blessing for our Church. The hall is set up for 70 people to sit comfortably. The seating allowance is for 120. Recently, the Church had a wedding and the reception was set for 115 seats. The hall is becoming a center of activity for our Church and the Community. The hall has been rented for a couple of events, the hall is used for a food pantry which serves hundreds in our community every month, community groups like the Arts Commission of Pharr and the Pharr Farmers Market Committee have been meeting in this space. We thank God for this extra space and often wonder how we survived before having this additional space.

We had a successful International Festival. This is our annual fundraiser. This year most of the funds were used to pay for the completion of the commercial kitchen. This allowed us to pay for the kitchen without having to borrow more money.

Food Pantry ministry continues to serve approximately 100-200 families every month. A family could be anywhere from one to 10 people. That means that 100 families could potential be about 1,000 individuals. The Food Pantry Program has had to cut back some of its services this year because of the high expenses of this type of operation. The food pantry came close to closing because of lack of funding, but because of an emergency appeal from the OCA and receiving of grants the food pantry continues to be operational at the moment. Thanks be to God that we have been able to raise some funds and continue to serve those who are in need in our community.

Our Church could have sent a good size group to St. Peter the Aleut Camp this year but chose not to participate in it this year. The camp is in need of Deanery organization and participation in order for it to serve the children of our Deanery. This is a project that needs to be given more attention by the clergy of our Deanery so that it is reflective of the Churches in our Deanery.

Our 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Winter Service Retreat for Youth & Young Adults was a huge success. The spiritual topic was, "Why Become (or Remain) Orthodox? How Do We Stand Up for & Live the Faith?" Approx. 20 attended this year. This was a little smaller than in years past but was a great success.

Fr. Antonio continues with Missionary trips to Mexico, and outreach to Latin America and the Latin American Community in the U.S.

## **Sts. George and Alexandra Orthodox Church**

**Ft. Smith, Arkansas**

### **Priest Paul Fetsko**

On August 1, 2012, Archpriest John Maxwell transitioned out of his position as rector of Sts. George and Alexandra Mission to focus his energies on the budding mission in Northwest Arkansas. Fr. Paul Fetsko became priest-in-charge effective that date. The Fall of 2012 was highlighted by significant renovations to the Nave of the church and a celebration honoring Fr. John and his wife, Matushka Debra, for the tireless work they did the past 16 years. This past year the mission received a significant monetary gift to be able to pay off its mortgage. Presently, we have 3 catechumens and anticipate a few new members moving into the area from out-of-state. Our average Sunday attendance is about 25 adults, but we had 44 people for Pascha. We do not want to become too caught up in numbers. Rather, we are striving to become a spiritually healthy and loving community.

### **Holy Apostles Orthodox Church**

#### **Bixby, Oklahoma**

#### **Priest Ambrose Arrington**

Holy Apostles in Bixby, Oklahoma has experienced a year of steady growth. We have baptized five new members since last summer, 1 adult, 1 youth, and 3 infants. We have experienced greater growth over the last year from Orthodox people moving into the area. We have continued development of the physical facilities of the church, including the installing of cabinetry in the altar, and the paving of the remaining two-thirds of our parking lot. We are also in the process of discerning the possibility and necessity of expanding our current chapel to accommodate future growth prior. The long-term plan is the construction of a larger temple, but we simply are not ready to undertake that step yet. This year, we also will celebrate our 10 year anniversary as a parish, glory be to God.

### **St John Orthodox Mission**

#### **Rogers Arkansas**

#### **Archpriest John Maxwell**

This past August, I was officially assigned as Priest in Charge of the mission in Rogers and we received the name St John Orthodox Mission. We are named after St. John Kochurov, the proto-martyr of the Bolshevik yoke and Missionary in America. He actually did missionary work in Slovak AR so we feel even more connected to him. I no longer have the spiritual responsibility of Sts George and Alexandra Orthodox Mission in Fort Smith.

The small but vibrant mission is making slow and steady progress. We have produced a Divine Liturgy book with the music, text and short explanation of the service. Our Iconostasis is now complete and the Icons of the four Evangelist have been written on the Royal Doors. Our Altar table has recently been built by one of our parishioners.

One Tuesday night a month the women meet for a book study. Every Wednesday night the mission holds a readers vespers. When I am not present for Divine Liturgy, they hold Typica. The choir also practices during the week and on Saturday before vespers. The choir is really coming along. I am there on most Saturday nights and Sundays. And often hold a well attended class after liturgy. During Great Lent we held the Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete services and Pre-Sanctified services on Fridays. We held Holy Week Services beginning on Holy Thursday Morning on, and celebrated our first Pascha which was well attended. We have 18 adult members and 8 children. There are others who come from time to time.

After losing a family due to a move, we received a family whose fathers are priests of the Antiochian jurisdiction. We recently had a family move into Rogers who have attended the last two Sundays. We have also had a couple of visitors recently, which included a Church of Christ minister and his wife. Parishoners regularly go to confession and communion. We held a well attended visitors vespers (15 first time visitors) and hosted Fr. David Rucker from OCMC.

### **Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church**

**Clinton, Mississippi**

**Archpriest Paul Yerger**

The most notable event here was our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration which was held March 1-2. We had a "family" celebration with our own members as speakers at a banquet Friday night and lunch after Liturgy Saturday morning. Some speakers were old-timers, some recent arrivals, and some young people who grew up in the church. It went very well and it helped our newcomers to feel a part of the community.

Since the last Assembly we have baptized 1 adult and 4 children, chrismated 4 adults, and crowned 3 in marriage. We had 6 people transfer out and 2 transfer in. We had one member embrace the monastic life at St. Tikhon's. At present we have 1 active catechumen. We had no deaths. We average about 80 people on a normal Sunday.

Our finances have been tight this year, mainly because the independent school which uses our parish hall has had difficulties and has been late making their contributions. But thanks be to God we live and do well.

### **St. John of Damascus Orthodox Mission (pending):**

**Tyler, Texas**

**Priest John Mikita**

### **St. Jonah Mission**

## **Alpine, Texas**

### **Archpriest John Filipovich**

Over the course of the last year, we've had two adult Chrismations and one Wedding. We currently have one Seeker. One of the highlights of the year was the construction of our new Iconostas. (If anyone needs a portable Iconostas, we have one available.) The Sacramental Life of the community is strong and the people are faithful. We've built a solid liturgical life with Wednesday evening Vespers & Class and Great Feast Days as well as a relatively full slate of Nativity & Holy Week/Paschal services. Attendance at Sunday Liturgies can vary from 8 to 25.

## **St Matthew the Apostle Mission**

### **Baton Rouge, LA**

#### **Priest Mark Christian**

St Matthew the Apostle Mission continues to meet in our storefront bookstore on Jefferson Highway in Baton Rouge. In August, we were delighted to have a visit from the Monk Job, who shared with us news regarding the OCMC efforts in Mongolia. Our Chancellor, Archpriest Marcus Burch, visited with us for a Sunday morning Divine Liturgy in September. Thanks to a generous friend of the mission, we were privileged to venerate relics of the Apostle Matthew on our patronal feastday in November. In December, we held our first Nativity Pageant, which involved 17 children and a number of adult volunteers. We continue to have regular classes for children and adults on Sunday mornings.

Over the past year our Sunday morning attendance has averaged between 30-40. These numbers have waxed and waned for a variety of reasons: we have baptized two children and two adults in the past year and continue to welcome inquirers and Orthodox Christians who move into the area, while bidding farewell to several families who have moved away. Also, a number of our members have become involved in three other Orthodox congregations that have been planted in south Louisiana (within an hour's drive): a new OCA mission in New Orleans, a new ROCOR mission in St. Francisville, and an OCA (Romanian) mission in Baton Rouge.

Our budget for 2013 reflects an ambitious increase, including a commitment to depositing monthly savings into a diocesan account for a future building/property acquisition. We disperse alms to those who ask for our help and have supported the IOCC, OCMC, and FOCUS. Challenges for the future include discerning the feasibility of moving to a new and more suitable location, continuing to welcome newcomers, and *"equipping the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."* (Eph 4:12)

## **Holy Nativity Orthodox Mission:**

### **Priest Jason Foster**

## **Bossier City, LA**

Thanks be to God, things at 'Holy Nativity' are moving forward. After many months of prayer and negotiating, we were able to purchase 11 acres of beautiful hard wood land in one of the nicest and fastest growing areas of Shreveport. Currently, we are interviewing architects and contractors with the hope of building Phase I (right now we are uncertain as to whether we will construct our parish hall or another building first) around the beginning of the new fiscal year. While these plans will help us reach out to a certain socio-economic group of people, our other new development will help us bring the presence of Christ to the inner-city of Shreveport. Presently, the Executive Director of Shreveport Parks and Recreation and a local City Councilman are working with us to secure a cottage in what is known as Princess Park (lower income, gang and drug related area). God willing, and through the prayers of St. Raphael of Brooklyn, who visited this exact area of Shreveport in 1914, the city will grant us a long term lease on the property by the end of the summer. Our plans include but are not limited to after school tutoring, developing a children's choir and addressing nutritional and other physical needs. Also at this time, the mission is blessed to have the highest average attendance to date - including five new catechumens and five new inquirers. Our pray is that our external concerns will be undergirded by our internal efforts so that our true growth is first and foremost a reflection of our dedication to the spiritual disciplines and the sacramental life of the Church. Please keep us in your prayers as we seek to further acquire the Holy Spirit together in order that we, as a people, may be conformed further into the likeness of Christ and have the power to make His love known to others in the Shreveport/Bossier City area.

## **St. Nektarios Orthodox Mission**

**Waxahachie, TX**

**Priest David Bozeman**

July 1<sup>st</sup> of this year marks our one year anniversary, technically speaking. We celebrated our first Divine Liturgy together on that date last year and since that time we have made remarkable progress in establishing an Orthodox presence in Waxahachie. Our first year saw the establishment of a proper worship space complete with a full iconostasis, program of icons, fellowship area, and a full and regular schedule of liturgical services. Our first Great Lent and Pascha together was an enriching and lively experience highlighted with the reception of our first five catechumens into the Church. At Pentecost of this year, we anticipate receiving five new seekers as catechumens as well. Our numbers are still modest but the faithful and just that: faithful. We have essentially doubled in size since our inception and at this rate we are hopeful in anticipating outgrowing our current space by this time next year.

## **St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Mission**

**Denison/Sherman, Tx**

**Priest Michael Storozuk**

Since the last Assembly, the St Paul community has baptized 4 Adults and 1 child (4 yrs. old). At present we have 1 catechumen and 1 serious inquirer who is receiving instruction. Because of

the above baptisms other family members are interested. We also have a couple of Protestant ministers that are looking into Orthodoxy. One attends our weekly Thursday morning Liturgy.

Improvements to our property continue although at a slow pace. Of course the most exciting thing at St Paul's are the new Orthodox Christians mentioned. In addition, we hope to host another gathering of priests and deacons from our deanery, an activity which our community looks forward to greatly.

**St. Sava Orthodox Mission (pending)**

**Plano, Texas**

**Priest Seraphim Hipsh**

**St. Seraphim Orthodox Cathedral (final report pending):**

**Dallas, Texas**

**Archpriest John Anderson**

St. Seraphim continues with the healing process. Attendance remains good, but giving has been on the decline recently. Our deanery camp of St. Peter the Aleut will not be held in 2013, but we hope to host this popular event next year.

The construction of the Archbishop Dmitri Memorial Chapel is moving along. We ask for your continued prayers in Christ.