

Atlanta Deanery - 2014 Assembly Reports

Fr. Alexander Fecanin

St. Mary of Egypt Church, Norcross, GA

St. Mary's has gone through a year of transition since the 2013 Diocesan Assembly. After nearly 16 years as rector, Archpriest Peter Smith has moved into the role of assistant priest.

Hieromonk Cyprian (DuRant) has moved into the position of rector after nearly 11 years as the assistant priest. While on one level this is a huge change for St. Mary's, many things remain the same. Fr. Peter continues many of his usual roles around the parish, while handing the day to day administration over to Fr. Cyprian. We thank Fr. Peter and matushka for all of his previous labors on behalf of the parish and the DOS.

The parish now becomes somewhat of a "pilot program" for the diocese, as Fr. Peter is given the opportunity to gradually ease into retirement over the course of 3 years. The diocese is assisting St. Mary's by supplementing Fr. Peter's salary until he is eligible for his full pension.

The parish is in the process of replacing the floor in the parish hall which had sustained water damage from a broken water heater last year. We are also renovating the priest's office and both of the bathrooms. The hall already has a significantly different appearance.

This year has witnessed us moving to an overhaul of our financial reports and accounting with the introduction of the ICONcmo Church Management system to the computer in the parish office. Among other things, it will allow us to automatically generate reports to parishioners about the status of their giving on a monthly basis. Hopefully we will be able to avoid the trap of having to scramble for pledges at the end of the year. The system will also enable parishioners to check on the financial status of the parish themselves. This program will aid us tremendously in maintaining transparency.

Youth Sunday school classes continue on Sunday Mornings. Fr. Peter taught an adult class during Great Lent, and Fr. Cyprian has taken over the catechesis.

St. Mary's continues an active role in the missions of the DOS. Fr. Peter serves St. Tikhon's in Chattanooga twice a month. Fr. Dimitri Oselinsky serves the Holy Myrrhbearers mission in Montgomery, AL and the Holy Resurrection mission in North Augusta, SC. Fr. Paul Burholt serves the mission in Marietta, GA.

We continue to have an active liturgical schedule. This year we have had 9 baptisms and 3 marriages.

Submitted by Fr. Cyprian Durant

St. Mary Magdalene Parish Rincon, Georgia

The parish membership is composed of 45 adults and 12 children. Ministering to the parish are one Hieromonk, one Deacon, two Readers and one Choir Director.

The parish owns 2 acres of land, on which sit the church building (built in 2006), the doublewide Residence (installed in December of 2002), a 20' by 20' picnic pavilion, a shed for storing the tractor and garden tools, a shed for storing yardsale items, and the 24' by 24' St. Nicholas storage building (built in 2012). There is also a large sign at the front of the property.

The parish celebrates Great Vespers each Saturday evening. On Sunday mornings we conduct Sunday Matins, the Hours and the Divine Liturgy. All of the Great Feasts are celebrated with liturgical services. During Great Lent the Presanctified Liturgy is conducted every Wednesday and Friday. Baptisms, Chrismations, Moliebens and anointings are conducted as necessary. The parish also has a Parish Traveling Icon which, every two weeks, is brought back to the church and then committed into the care of another of our households for the next two weeks. While not "officially" a miracle-working icon, many families have recounted wondrous things that have occurred for and within the family while the icon is in residence; consequently, families very much look forward to their two weeks of having the icon back in their home.

Once a month Fr. James and Deacon Vassily travel 2 and a half hours away to the Sts. Constantine & Helen Mission in Helena, Georgia to offer the sacraments, give counsel and guidance, and to conduct a monthly parish meeting. Also once a month, Fr. James (Spiritual Father of the Sts. Mary & Martha Monastery) travels 2 and a half hours to the monastery to meet with each of the Nuns, to share a meal together, sometimes to conduct the Divine Liturgy for the Nuns, and often to participate in a monastic class with the Nuns.

The parish has given birth to a Sisterhood and a Brotherhood, both of which perform philanthropic outreach on behalf of the parish family. Each of the "Hoods" (as we refer to them) meet separately once a month to discuss issues and projects. We also have partnered with the local Roman Catholic Church and participate in their Food Pantry program by donating canned and dry food items for those in need. So far we have donated approximately 300 bags of food over the last 30 months.

In order to bring in extra income for the parish, on the 1st Saturday of the month we offer the following items for sale: pierogies, nutrolls, cabbage rolls, jams, baby bibs, handcream, soap, and dog biscuits, all made within the parish.

We also have a Kiosk, started some years ago by Diakonissa Helena which offers liturgical and cultural items for sale to parishioners and visitors alike.

Deacon Vassily is in charge of our Sunday School program.

On the last Sunday of each month we conduct the monthly VISION meeting during which we discuss where we are as a parish, where we want to go and grow, and the steps which we might need to take in order for the parish to continue evolving.

During the past 6 years we have hosted our Russian Festival, an event which draws approximately 400-500 visitors from South Carolina, Georgia and Florida; this coming October

25th we will host our 5th Russian Festival. During the Festival we offer ethnic foods for lunch, items for sale from the Kiosk, and put on a number of cultural events (our choir gives 3 concerts, we usually have a strolling violinist, and have had 2 dance troupes entertaining our visitors). The Festival partly brings in extra income as well as fulfills an outreach function concerning Orthodoxy and the Russian heritage to those in our area.

Submitted by Fr. James (Bohlman)

Sts. Constantine & Helen Mission Helena, Georgia

The Mission is composed of a total of 13 members (10 adults and 3 children). The Mission owns 2 acres of land on which it has established a doublewide building which provides space for a chapel, a kitchen and Fellowship area, two classrooms and two bathrooms.

The Mission has one Reader in its membership. Each week the Mission conducts two Reader's Services, as well as a weekly choir practice. Once a month Fr. James (Bohlman) and Father Deacon Vassily Kocher travel from the St. Mary Magdalene parish to the Mission in order to offer the sacraments, give counsel and guidance, and to conduct a monthly parish meeting.

The Mission faithfully tithes 10% of its monthly income to the Diocese of the South.

The Mission is fervently praying for a full-time Priest/Pastor of its own who would help the Mission grow as well as enabling the Mission to have a full liturgical and sacramental life. To that end, by way of offering housing compensation to a future priest and his family, the Mission has purchased a 3-bedroom home and acreage across the road from the Chapel. The Mission would also be able to offer a small monthly stipend.

Submitted by Fr. James (Bohlman)

SAINT BASIL'S MISSION, MARIETTA, GEORGIA

Marietta has a population of about 60,000 people. It lies on the north side of Atlanta. By population it is the fourth largest of the principal cities of the Atlanta metropolitan statistical area.

Saint Basil's mission had its origins in February of 2010, when a small house a few miles from Marietta Square was rented and work began by two families from Saint Mary of Egypt parish in Norcross to renovate the building for Orthodox use. In July of that year, His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah blessed what was now an oratory and bookstore, with the dedication to Saint Basil the Great. From this time Reader's Vespers was served every Saturday evening. In the fall of 2012 Father Paul Burholt began serving Great Vespers on an informal basis at Saint Basil's every few weeks, with Reader's Vespers on other Saturdays. Toward the close of 2013 more people began to express interest in the nascent mission and attend the Vespers services. As a result, Saint Basil's was recognized as a mission station of the Diocese of the South in December 2013 and a store front property just off Marietta Square was rented in January 2014. Over the next few months, considerable love, hard work and financial commitment has seen the transformation of the empty space into a fully equipped Orthodox chapel, complete with iconostasis, along with bookstore area, small kitchen and priest's office. Great Vespers was transferred to the new location in February and the chapel was ready for the first celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Holy Cross Sunday, March 23rd. As the renovations continued and people felt the time had come for them to embrace Saint Basil's as their own, regular Sunday celebration of the Divine Liturgy began with the Feast of Holy Pentecost, June 8th. At present, around forty people gather on Sundays for Liturgy, including many children.

Remarkable features of Saint Basil's are, first, that it had very small beginnings as an act of faith with a dogged commitment to Readers Services. Second it occupied from the start a visible permanent building, and now has a very visible and attractive location. Third, the work on the physical renovations has from the beginning been performed as much as possible by the hands of the Orthodox faithful themselves and by their financial commitment. Fourth, there has been at every stage a zeal for the physical beauty of the Lord's house and the singing. Fifth, and not least, the members of the new mission are devout members of existing parishes (chiefly St John the Wonderworker in downtown Atlanta and Saint Mary of Egypt Norcross). They bring to Saint Basil's a solid formation as Orthodox Christians which they have received in those communities. Further, the time-honored American Orthodox church-bookstore combination is well suited to the milieu of Marietta square. May the Lord perfect the work He has begun!

Submitted by Priest Paul Burholt

St. Gregory the Theologian Mission, Tuscaloosa, AL

The Mission of Saint Gregory's which is located in Moundville, Alabama, continues to work on our new chapel. The main structure has been completed; with additions be made as money becomes available. Work on the Iconostasis has been an ongoing project adding two new panel to our existing Iconostasis: with a third tier being planned, but not under construction as of today. Two new 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: (still not completed).

Work is ongoing in our kitchen, to make it a commercial grade allowing us to serve foods to the public. We have had two of our heating and air conditioning unit to go down in our dining area about 24 years old. We plan on replacing them with the new duct less units like the ones we installed in the chapel: this was completed just before Holy Pascha this year.

St Gregory's is blessed to have a wonderful book store, operated by the Sisterhood of Saint Xenia, which includes many items from Russia, Romania, and Greece. Looking for a special icon, just make your desire known; we will try to make your wish come true. Our bookstore is also online, and we invite everyone to visit it at stgregoryoca.org.

St. Gregory's is located 25 minutes from the University of Alabama campus. Orthodox students are encouraged to attend service while they are away from home.

Our parish is regional with some people driving as far as 60 to 100 miles which means most of our attendance for Saturday Vespers and Sunday Liturgy. Often we have visitors from other Orthodox Churches while traveling thru the South, or when visiting relatives.

This year, His Eminence Archbishop Nikon received the Very Reverend Archpriest John Brown, into the Dioceses of the South. Fr. John will be attached to St. Gregory, but serves as a full time prison Chaplin, in a women prison in Aliceville Alabama.

Last year, St. Gregory received two new infants thru Holy Baptism and Holy Chrismation. We also untied two couples in Holy Matrimony. We have several people inquiring about the Orthodox faith, and pray for their coming to the True Faith.

Please continue to pray for Saint Gregory's, and its work in Our Lords vineyard!

Submitted by Fr. Demetrius Edwards

St. Innocent Orthodox Church, Macon GA

Things have been going well at St. Innocent Orthodox Church. Sunday attendance has continued to hover around 45-60 people and at times this swells to 70 or so. We continue to have a steady stream of visitors and inquirers. It seems that God is always sending people to us.

In October of last year we had Fr. Andrew Damick come and speak at our 3rd annual Bible and BBQ. At this event we offer free food, church tours and a guest speaker. This year we served around 250 people. We were also able to have a well-attended concert featuring the Konevets Quartet in early December. These events were geared to expose people to our faith and, in particular, to our hospitable community. In February, with much joy and thankfulness, we celebrated our 10 year anniversary of consecration.

The day to day ministries of the parish also continue. Church school is still going well and is divided into three groups. We have regular inquirer and catechism classes. The choir meets regularly for practice and has grown significantly in the last year both in talent and ability. The prison ministry still meets weekly at Central State Prison in Macon. In prison our typical gathering has around 10 attendees. Our OCF chapter is currently dormant. Although the OCF chapter is dormant, Fr. Theophan is regularly invited to the local colleges to give presentations on Orthodox Christianity. Fr. Theophan was able to complete his first unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE) this spring. Fr. Theophan is part of the local ministerial association which has given the parish inroads to our surrounding community. A local community club meets monthly in our parish hall. As would be expected, our website is updated weekly.

Currently we have a few operating committees that are working on future projects. We have an Iconography Committee which is working towards the ultimate goal of having our beautiful church "frescoed." If all goes well we may be able to begin phase one of our iconography project as early as February 2015. Our Parish Hall Committee has begun the process of assessing our needs and designing a permanent parish hall. Currently we use a rented mobile office space which does not have enough classrooms or even a kitchen. Our lack of space greatly restricts us. The ever-active Outreach Committee continues to brainstorm and execute ideas related to evangelizing our local area. We are in the process of planning our 4th annual Bible and BBQ which will take place on Saturday October 25th.

Submitted by Fr. Theophan Buck

Holy Myrrhbearers Orthodox Mission, Montgomery, AL

Holy Myrrhbearers Mission continues to gather together for worship services every weekend at the Chapel of Holy Cross Episcopal School at 4400 Bell Road in Montgomery, Alabama. It is presently being serviced by Archpriest Dimitri Oselinsky, retired and attached to St. Mary of Egypt Orthodox Church in Norcross, Georgia. The present membership of the parish is 14 adults and 11 children.

Great Vespers and Divine Liturgy are served on two weekends of the month. The other weekends a Reader's Service is conducted. Major Feasts served at the mission this year were: The Meeting of the Lord, The Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem, and Holy Pentecost. Since we only use the chapel on weekends, the liturgical celebrations of these feasts were spiritually motivating for all.

The main contact persons at the mission are William and Shannon Thompson, 103 Wildridge Drive, Troy, AL. phone: 334-566-2378. Average attendance at Saturday evening Great Vespers ranges from 10 to 14 people and at the Sunday Divine Liturgy, 14 to 22 people. All members receive the Holy Sacrament of Communion at every Liturgy. All members participate in the Sacrament of Confession regularly.

We have had several new people join our mission this past year. We welcomed Karl and Alyssa Hjembo with their four children Aidan, Gregory, Olivia, and Cecilia and Dr. Brian and Robin Sellers with their two children Callie and Andrew. We are looking forward in September 2014 of having the mission's first wedding ceremony. Andrew Conner Blake and Kelsey McFarland will be united in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony on the weekend after Labor Day. Also in the past year we have had one death, Mary Bauer, and one conversion, Andrew Conner Blake. One person, Arthur Nichols, has left the mission.

Mrs. Nancy Hannan continues to direct our choir, and the choir continues to improve under Nancy's capabilities.

By the grace of God we continue to glorify His Name at Holy Myrrhbearers Mission, and we look forward to more visitors and possibly new members.

In Christ Our Lord,

Submitted by Father Dimitri Oselinsky

St. Luke Orthodox Mission, Anniston, AL

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. Over the past year we have added four new members and currently have several serious inquirers. We experienced minor trials in the shape of an attempted break in and the partial collapse of our dining area ceiling after a frozen pipe burst this winter. But the Lord protected us and guided us through these and any other little tribulations.

We have continued our consistent emphasis on the importance of daily services and the centrality of prayer and worship in the life of the Mission. Therefore we typically have services or a class on six out of seven days of the week. Our Wednesday night class has been focusing on the practical aspects of living the Orthodox Faith. Our Sunday school program has continued to develop and thrive. We are also in the process of developing our first Vacation Bible School for later this summer.

A new handwritten icon of St. Basil the Great, by Fr. Jerome Sanderson, was donated to the Temple and we have continued to enhance our flowerbeds and landscaping around the Church greatly enhancing the Temple's exterior beauty. We are extending our outreach to the nearby Jacksonville State University, by beginning to serve a daily matins service once a month in the campus chapel. Camera equipment has been donated and we are preparing a new media outreach using the tools of the modern era to proclaim the Ancient Faith to a new generation.

Glory to God for all things.

Submitted by Fr. Basil Henry

St. Symeon Orthodox Church, Birmingham, AL

It has been an exciting and challenging year at St. Symeon's in Birmingham with a new temple building project. The new construction is on the church property adjacent to the existing church so that has certainly added to the challenge to our ongoing parish life at St. Symeon's. Everyone has kept a positive spirit and shown great patience with this time of transition and growth.

The counsel and financial expertise and assistance of Diocesan Treasurer Milos Konjevich and the Managed Debt Program have been invaluable to the building process! We cannot say that boldly enough! May God grant Milos many years!!!

In March there was a Children's Lenten Retreat attended by around 40 young people, which went very well. .

The parish is ably served by Fr. Ignatius Crockett (Ret.) and Fr. Deacon Ephraim Rivers with Subdeacon Innocent Krause and Readers James Gordon and Christopher Ritchey.

Pascha was glorious as always despite the construction challenges.

Sacramental statistics since the last Assembly: Baptisms:
13 Adults and 9 children / 1 Marriage and 2 Funerals

We hope to be in our new building around the time of the Assembly and look forward to our move and to a promising year of worship ahead.

Glory to God for all His many blessings on our community!

Submitted by Fr. Alexander Fecanin