



ST. MICHAEL'S SKETE
2008 - 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

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2008-2009
ANNUAL REPORT

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
DIOCESE OF THE SOUTH,
UNDER THE OMOPHORION OF HIS BEATITUDE,
METROPOLITAN JONAH, LOCUM TENENS.

CONTENTS

1. DAILY LIFE
2. BUILDING PROJECTS
3. GROWTH

DAILY LIFE

As always, we strive to live the fullness of the Orthodox monastic life according to the canons and traditions of the Orthodox Church. We continue in our service to the Lord by prayer, labor, and hospitality.

LITURGICAL CYCLE

We are continually striving to live a full liturgical life. Under the advisement of Metropolitan Jonah, and due to the fact that we are a smaller community, we serve daily Vespers, Compline, and Matins. Our typical rule is to have confession for all the brethren during the chanting of the canon during Compline. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays instead of Matins we celebrate Divine Liturgy. As always on Sundays we celebrate Matins and Divine Liturgy together. We currently spend Mondays as a "desert day" where the whole day is spent in prayer and study in the cells or on walks. Each monk is obligated to say his respected cell rule each day. We eat one common meal a day at dinner, and monks are open to fast until the dinner meal or take a "lunch on your own" at mid-day if needed.

CANDLE BUSINESS

Our main source of income remains our candle making industry. It has been hard to keep up this past year as we have received more customers and have had other tasks that

have called for our attention (i.e. floods, see below about floods.) We still have over 10,000 candles to make each month for various Churches and retail shops.

Our current wax supplier is Hoefli Honey Farm, located in Del Norte Colorado. About twice a year we drive up, purchase a little over a ton of beeswax, and bring it back to the monastery. The main candle sizes we offer are 3/8" x 11" tapers and 5/16" x 6" tapers, though we will make any size at a customer's request.

DOXA

We continue to publish our quarterly magazine, DOXA. Last year we were only able to publish three of the normal four issues, and so this year we are pressing hard to get out all four issues. We recently changed our masthead to a more graphically pleasing format. We have been very happy with it. Please contact the monastery if you would like to be added to our mailing list.

GUEST HOUSE

Our guesthouse continues to be used with great regularity by frequent guests and pilgrims. We provide hospitality to up to 100 guests a year and are happy for their contributions, especially with regard to their assistance with our labor on the grounds. It can be tricky to maintain 15 acres with only three monks in residence!

This last year a worker donated time and has begun to tile each room of the guest house. They have completed two of the five rooms that will be tiled eventually. The work is beautiful, in traditional southwestern style.

MISC. TASKS & LABORS

This year we have put in most of our garden and expect a bountiful harvest in September. We have received more rain this year than usual and so we have had a challenge in keeping up with weeding. This year recent activity on the local irrigation ditch has brought struggle. We share this ditch with two neighboring properties. In June, this ditch sprang a leak while we were in church one afternoon and when we were finished we realized our garden area was almost washed away. Since then, we have found leaks caused by rat and gopher holes causing flooding in parts of the property that are normally dry. These problems have been hard to fix. Erosion issues have been an issue and we have been working to fixing such problems by one monastic cell in particular, as well as in the garden.

In addition, we do our own bookkeeping, however we have been strongly considering hiring an accountant to assist us in our bookkeeping tasks. Also, we have been preparing to harvest a bountiful fruit crop this year and are making preparations to freeze,

dehydrate, can, and sell much of this produce. We will have an abundance of peaches, apples, and pears, as well as pumpkins. This year we hope to sell most of the pumpkins at the nearest local store (20 minutes away), Bode's, and anticipate giving some away as gifts as well.

In addition, Fr. Andrew together with Hierodeacon Philip, of St. John of Shanghai Monastery in Manton, California, have been working on a translation of the Psalter. This translation is based on the Coverdale Psalter adjusted to the Septuagint Psalter.

BUILDING PROJECTS

HOLY RESURRECTION CEMETERY – Sadly, since last year, the labor on Holy Resurrection Cemetery has been stalled. We had a disagreement regarding design with our hired landscape architect who decided at the last minute that he would not work with us. His desire was to put a “new-age” spiral in the middle of the cemetery, and when we requested that this be left out of the design, we were fired. We are stuck in a position that needs a decision whether to come up with the design ourselves, to work a dear friend who is a contractor, or to hire for another landscape architect.

MONASTIC CELLS – We have raised the funds to build one additional cell and also to fix up the “old mill house” that is on our property. We will be able to convert the old mill house into a cell, retaining its original historic appearance, but utilizing it as a space for a brother to reside. This mill house was the place where the local villagers in Cañones used to grind their wheat for the whole of the community to share. We are in a “holding pattern” as we wait for our contractor's schedule to clear so that he can begin his labor on both these buildings as well as in our cemetery.

MONASTERY TRAPEZA – Sadly, we have not even begun to raise the funds that we will need to begin planning or building the new Trapeza building. We have had several who have said when the economy improves we will receive donations for the building of the Trapeza. But for now as the economy is in a low, we expect this has had a negative impact on fundraising in general at St. Michael's Skete.

GARDENING 365 DAYS A YEAR – Since last year we have established a goal to build a large greenhouse that will allow us to grow our own produce 365 days a year. We hope to sustain our produce needs and also provide another source of income by selling fresh produce and candles at the local farmer's markets in Española, Los Alamos, and Santa Fe. We are in the brainstorming process and hope to raise funds for the building of a needed greenhouse.

SELF-SUSTAINED LIVING – Due to economy and lack of manpower we have placed the actual movement toward self-sustained living on a “back-burner.” Part of our goal is to switch to a combination of solar, hydro, and wind powers, and to move forward it seems we will need to look into alternative fundraisers, such as government grants available for “green” energy usage.

GROWTH

COMMUNITY GROWTH

MONASTICS

St. Michael’s Skete currently has received one monk since last year’s report, and we are now three tonsured monastics in residence, with one novice on assignment in San Diego California, who continues to take care of his mother with Alzheimer’s Disease.

CANDIDATES & WORKERS

We have two prospective candidates who are currently in dialogue and making their initial visitations to the monastery. There is one worker who is in residence. In addition to these, there are several men with whom we have been in dialogue that have expressed interest in coming to the Skete as monastics, but for their current obligations are unable to come inside the next quarter.

LAYMEN

We still have three local neighbors who come to services regularly, especially on Sundays for Divine Liturgy. As we are the closest church, we are happy to serve the fullness of the sacramental life of the Church to them, baring marriage.

RECEPTION OF INQUIRERS/NOVICES

Due to experience with many who have come to the monastery with the desire to become a monk, and to unpleasant occurrences in not screening some of these candidates, we have continued to put together a program for inquirers. The quote-unquote “program” will help us and the inquirer discern whether one who comes is prepared to enter into the monastic way of life, capable of living in close relation with others. We desire men who come to approach out of a place of growth and an established and mature Orthodox piety and self-honesty. We desire men, to have worked on mended to some degree, any wounds from the past that might hinder one from being in a relationship of brotherly love, obedience, chastity, and selflessness. We encourage inquirers who are new converts, or those who come straight to us out of these types of dysfunctional situations, to live in a parish, in honest relationship with their Priest, healing their souls, living into the sacramental life, in all piety before coming to the monastery. So frequently, due to our lack of experience, our monastic life and peace has been severely disrupted by not having these measures in place. For this reason, among others, we have entered into dialogue with other monastic brothers for

guidance in growing up a monastic habitation.

TYPICON

As always the Typicon of St. Michael Skete is available to anyone who would like to read the details for the day to day functioning of the monastery.

WE REQUEST YOUR BEATITUDE'S ARCHPASTORAL PRAYERS,
AS WELL AS THE PRAYERS OF ALL THE BRETHREN OF THE DIOCESE OF THE SOUTH
FOR ST. MICHAEL'S SKETE.
