

South Florida Deanery Assembly 09 Report

Christ the Saviour Cathedral * Miami Lakes, FL * Fr. Philip Reese

The Miami Cathedral saw an active year since our last Assembly. We were blessed to have two visits with Metropolitan Jonah, once as an Archimandrite and Chancellor of our Diocese in September, and again as our new Metropolitan at our parish Feast Day in January. He also gave a Saturday retreat. Additionally, we also Fr. Basil Summer conducted a retreat in February. These retreats were all advertised to the local Orthodox South Florida community.

In December, iconographer, Dmitri Shkolnik and three other of his team members came to the cathedral for the next phase of iconography. The four squinches and the flat ceiling were completed. In March, Dmitry returned with a helper to complete the main apse behind the altar. Dmitry and his team will return for phase three (altar ceiling and flat walls) in the November/December period.

Beginning in March, the parish began a series of strategic planning meetings in order to coordinate future goals and events. This has been very helpful in looking critically at various aspects of our community, phasing in new ways to encourage greater participation among our current parishioners, as well as looking for ways to become more visitor friendly.

As in other parishes, we have seen a small but regular stream of Russian/Ukrainian immigrants who attend but generally are reticent to participate in or join the community.

This year's stats: Baptisms: 13, Weddings: 4, Conversions: 2

St. Peter & Paul Church * Miami, FL * Fr. Alexander Padlo

Sunday attendance averages about 17 and Feast Days during the week at 8. The parish is blessed with good choir members, making the services beautiful and prayerful.

Two yard sale fund raisers a year are organized by the parish in February and November. They are more than fund raisers as they provide for fellowship and outreach. Tours of the church also take place at these events and relationships with the local neighborhood are nurtured.

Recently this year the flat roof over the altar succumbed to the elements and we have containers catching the leaks during storms. We have made arrangements for repairs.

St. Nicholas Church * Ft. Lauderdale, FL * Fr. Kirrill Gvosdev

Once again, by the Grace of God and the Intercessions of St. Nicholas, we have survived another year with some very positive growth. Our renovation continues, albeit slowly. While our Church School could be much larger than it is, the children who attend regularly chanted the prokeimenon and epistle for Palm Sunday, prepared Prospora and sent in their own prayer requests, and learned to sing some of the responses. Pascha Night and Pascha Vespers were unbelievably joyous with approximately 600+ souls and 200+ souls respectively. This year, instead of 'blini' to usher in Great Lent, we had a good old American Pancake breakfast and a raffle of all sorts of goodies donated by local merchants and

restaurants, both Russian and American. Some of the émigré adults are gathering in groups to regularly study “Zakon Bojie” (a catechism).

As a priest I have been so busy that I have been unable to take ‘personal’ time off, but seeing the fruits of our labors has made it all worthwhile both for me and Matushka. We have a Communications Director now who handles the website and sends announcements and bulletins via the internet to more than 360 families who have signed up to receive them. I have introduced ‘new’ services, drawing from our ancient tradition such as Akathists for Pascha, Ascension and Pentecost; Paschal Panikhida for Joy Day; special Molebens (once a month), etc. Aside from any house, business and car blessings, I have also blessed yachts! These services are in Slavonic and draw large crowds. I apologized to some of our Haitian parishioners who attend these services as well that there was no English and they replied it doesn’t matter the language, it is the feeling that God is here with us that counts. Aside from many house, business and car blessings, this year, I have also blessed yachts! Once again, the parish sold traditional Syrnaya Pascha and Kulich and as well as “traditional” American “Easter” baskets, Russian and English Nativity and Pascha greeting cards, English language St. Andrew of Crete books for Lent, and unique Orthodox “Advent” calendars and Pascha Calendars for children.

From July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009 I had:
55 Baptisms of babies and children 6 - adult Baptisms for a total of 61.

6 Weddings, 6 Funerals.

Aside from monthly Molebens, I had an additional 38 Molebni and 89 Panikhidi during this timeframe.

St. Herman of Alaska Church * Lake Worth, FL * Fr. Michael Zaparyniuk

We maintain 35 to 60 worshipers at Sunday Divine Liturgy.

We hold monthly parish celebration dinners, honoring Name/Feast Days, birthdays and anniversaries of our people.

We continue holy food festivals monthly monthly, however not during Church Fasts.

Our renovation debt has been reduced by \$22,000 from our original debt of \$52,000. \$30,000 to go.

As always, we had Pascha Services with standing room only attendance, using both English and Slavonic.

We continue to share with our members and friends our “Go Forth” Ministry, distributing religious literature and parish news to a mailing distribution of 500 homes.

This year: 2 Baptisms, 8 who fell asleep in the Lord.

St. Peter the Apostle Mission * Jupiter, FL * Fr. Philip Kontos

Since my (Fr. Philip) arrival at the mission (in August, 2008), we've had quite a year, some of it sorrowful and much of it joyful.

By the Grace of God:

- We baptized and chrismated one man, the son of a parishioner, on his deathbed and the buried him. (aged 37)
- We buried the son of another parishioner (28 years old), and longtime member of the parish passed away as well (aged about 50) and was buried in PA. We held memorial services for him in FL.
- We Chrismated one adult and baptized/chrismated an infant.
- We have added our first person to the catechumenate and have begun weekly instruction. Her two small children will also be brought into the Church when she is. Another candidate will join the ranks of the catechumenate when she recovers from double knee replacement surgery and can come to the Church. She is also receiving weekly instruction.
- St. Peter's has participated in many pan-Orthodox events (Sunday of Orthodoxy and Theophany among them).
- We have begun to look into partnering with St. Mark's Greek Orthodox Church in starting up an OCF Chapter at Florida Atlantic University.
- We have come close to buying a building for the Church and have come to the conclusion that buying land and building would suit our needs better...allowing us to work in phases. Suitable land has been found at a reasonable price and location. As of this writing (July 3) a Special Parish Meeting has been called for July 12 to discuss making an offer on the land.
- An "Agape Fund" has been started to help Fr. Philip attend to the needs of those who are down on their luck and need a helping hand from the Church (in special collections we have helped a few people pay their rent to avoid eviction and we have helped locals to get their power turned back on). Many of our members also participate in Habitat for Humanity and other charitable concerns.
- A Monday night Book/Bible Study has been going on since September. Our numbers fluctuate, but we keep plugging away. Responses have been positive. There has also been some community building via baseball outings and holiday get-togethers at parishioners' homes.
- We have on occasion held Vespers services at the homes of parishioners our Adopt A Highway cleanup project days. More home services have been requested and the logistics of this are being worked out.
- We've held more of the Lenten other services than in previous years. (we meet in an Elementary School, which makes this a difficult, though not insurmountable prospect).
- The parish keeps on plugging away with panikhidas, house blessings, hospital visits, etc.

St. James the Apostle Mission * Port St. Lucie, FL * Fr. Ernesto Rios

We give thanks and glory to God for all the blessings we have received. Our parish family has grown and our median age has decreased to reflect that growth. Although our voting membership is only forty seven (47) our attendance and communal membership is much more. Two years ago our average Sunday attendance was 65. It is now an average approximately 82.

For last year's Pascha, 2008, there were 101 participants but this year we began the Paschal celebration with 135 and ended up with 90 at the blessing of the Paschal baskets.

During the summer months attendance is always diminished but we found that even during this season last year we averaged 68 participants. This year we are maintaining that rate.

Some of our new families have relocated from the Midwest and the northeast US and from different parts of Russia. This melding of our different cultures has given all of us a richer understanding of our Orthodox faith and traditions. We are now truly a very multicultural parish family with Arabic, Greek and Slavic roots that unites us in our common practice of the Orthodox faith.

At last years diocesan assembly His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri, ordained reader Robert Andrew McCrocklin to the sub-deaconate and reader Paul Hilko to the Holy Deaconate. They are wonderful additions to our parish life and Divine services.

We have only had two Chrismations and two infant baptisms up to now but I am most happy to report that by December of 2009 we will have three more infant baptisms to celebrate. There is no more beautiful sound than that of children in church and I thank Our Lord this blessing.

The economy has affected some of our families but we can only continue to do our best and trust that Our Lord will guide and help us as He always has.

St. Demetrius Mission * Naples, FL * Fr. Gleb McFatter

Attendance during the seasonal months has remained steady at approximately 75-80 per Sunday. Attendance during the off-season has increased from around 30 to 40 on Sundays.

Pascha was overflowing and the Holy Week services were much better attended than in prior years.

Paschal Matins and Liturgy are split between Saturday evening and Sunday morning. At Midnight on Saturday, a Romanian service was held under the authority of Archbishop NATHANIEL with approximately 300 Romanians in attendance.

Naples now has four Orthodox parishes with a fifth (Romanian) being contemplated.

There is an increase in younger families and individuals attending the parish. The choir has now been well organized and approximately 10 members sing in the choir on Sundays.

An additional Reader is being tonsured at the Assembly in Atlanta, giving us two at this time.

The parish is sponsoring 3 of our youth to attend summer camp with Fr. John Hainsworth in Victoria, British Columbia.

Renovations started in 2005 have now been completed and amounts borrowed for this purpose have been repaid. The Parish has no debt at this time.

Holy Cross Church * Ft. Myers, FL * Fr. Leonid Palceski

Average Sunday Attendance: about 40 in Winter, and about 24 in Summer.

Our Church School has been energized through the use of popular religious video presentations.

A young new family with two children have recently joined our parish.

We have upgraded our building for better handicapped access through outside handrails.

We have restored the church cupola, improving its appearance.

We have sponsored the deanery Lenten Mission Vespers on the third Sunday of Lent.

Holy Spirit Church * Venice, FL * Vacant

The parish is being served liturgically by various local retired clergy and currently is not yet seeking a permanent priest. It has growing attendance, growing income, and an enthusiastic membership. Its tithe to the diocese is a close second behind the Cathedral. The parish is also represented in the local clergy association. It also is looking forward to expanding the building to accommodate its growing membership and attendance.