

Appalachian Deanery Report
2019 Diocese of the South Annual Meeting

The Appalachian Deanery consists of the Missions and Parishes under the geographical region of the Diocese of the South within the states of Tennessee (East of Nashville), Kentucky, and Virginia (excluding the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudon, Prince William, and Stafford – these counties being in the area known as “Northern Virginia” and part of the Diocese of Washington, D.C.). The Appalachian Deanery would also assume the prerogative to plant missions in the area of West Virginia south of Charleston.

St. Ambrose of Milan Mission, Roanoke/Salem, Virginia

The faithful gathering under the heavenly intercession of St. Ambrose of Milan continue to increase in number under the very capable pastoral direction of Archpriest Samuel Gantt (Retired). Fr. Sam is kept busy with regular inquiry about the Orthodox Faith, and the instruction of Catechumens. His faithful service has recently been recognized by the Holy Synod with the award of the dignity of wearing the Palitza. Axios! An encouraging commitment sustained by the mission is their monthly contribution of the tithe to the Diocese and also increased compensation of the serving priest(s). They have been meeting weekly over the past year in rented space at the Roanoke Council of Garden Clubs, only needing to find additional space during Holy Week for their services. They recently supported Fr. Sam to attend continuing education at St. Tikhon Orthodox Theological Seminary, as well as additional time for spiritual and physical renewal on the seminary and monastery grounds. The goal for St. Ambrose Mission is to find a rental location that they would be able to set up for regular services without having to assemble and take down liturgical items each week, and to afford the assignment of a priest that will allow Fr. Sam to step back into retirement from the demands of a growing mission. They are very close to affording these goals and hope to see one or both accomplished in 12-18 months.

St. Anne Orthodox Church, Oak Ridge/Knoxville, Kentucky

The faithful gathering under the heavenly intercession of St. Anne (Grandmother of our Lord in the flesh) continue to increase in number even as the anticipated retirement date of Archpriest Stephen Freeman approaches. The growth in attendance and tithes is evident, and they are also earnestly looking toward the construction of a permanent Temple adjacent to the current building on their property. Since July 2018, Priest Daniel Greeson has served as an assistant to Fr. Stephen, and he and his growing family have been a welcome addition to the parish. Whenever a parish regularly has attendees and communicants over 100, a second chalice is a very welcome blessing. As the planning and construction of the Temple takes shape, and the financial means are assembled to see this

project commence, the permanent presence of St. Anne Orthodox Church in the West Knoxville/Oak Ridge area will eventually show the fruit of additional meeting places and potential missions planted in the region. The missionary legacy of Fr. Stephen Freeman in Tennessee, with the help of other faithful lay people, priests and their families, is evident on our Deanery list. His service has been recognized by the Holy Synod award of the Palitza. Axios! As Fr. Stephen prepares to enter a new phase of priestly ministry during retirement, our Deanery asks God to grant he, Matushka Beth, and their family, many years.

St. Andrew Church, Ashland, Virginia

The faithful who are gathering under the heavenly intercession of the Holy Apostle, First-called, Andrew, have seen continued decline that has made it necessary for Priest Adam Sexton to supplement the family income with additional work outside of the Church. While this is always a scenario to be avoided, it is not uncommon for a newly planted mission to have a bi-vocational priest, and that is the spirit evident among the faithful who remain at St. Andrew's. They are committed to seeing the Parish grow and offer the Orthodox Faith to a college town along the eastern Amtrak/I-95 corridor that is on the edge of two commuter routes for both Washington, D.C. and Richmond, VA, proudly regarded as the "Center of the Universe." They will accept a missionary spirit and work to draw more people into the net. Since St. Cyprian of Carthage is so near this sister Parish, there will be collaboration of effort to provide the faithful with services, ministry and outreach endeavors, as well as further mission effort in and around the Richmond/Petersburg/Hopewell tri-cities. The faithful are working with Fr. Adam to complete an interior beautification of the Temple, including some physical changes, a fresh coat of paint, and the addition of canvas icons of the Platytera of the Theotokos on the Apse wall and the Pantocrator on the ceiling of the Nave. Along with recent exterior beautification of the Church building, the physical presence of St. Andrew's Church newly beautified is certainly ready to attract people to worship God in spirit and truth. Fr. Adam was recently given the Synodal award for the dignity of wearing the Gold Cross. Axios! Many years to Fr. Adam, Matushka Angela and their family.

St. Athanasius Church, Nicholasville/Lexington, Kentucky

The faithful who are gathering under the heavenly intercession of St. Athanasius the Great continue to show tremendous growth after the completion of the new building on their property in the Orchard Subdivision adjacent to the busy patronage of the local Walmart. Their growth is evident in their tithe to the Diocese of the South and the progress toward paying the debt for their building construction. The tremendous accomplishment of the St. Athanasius Church is evidence of the very capable ministry of Priest Justin Patterson, who has recently received the Synodal award of the dignity of Archpriest. Axios! And, many years, Fr. Justin, Matushka Tamara and their family. A very full

Liturgical schedule is the backbone of Parish life at St. Athanasius, but the outreach to their community is not lacking at all, and the faithful definitely know the joy of fellowship down “On Lime Lane.” The effort to support college ministry in the region is one of the reasons there is the impetus for what is hoped to be a mission start up in Berea, Kentucky. The faithful have also supported Fr. Justin in what was recently a delegation of OCA clergy in exchange with Russian Orthodox clergy, a sign of healthy interaction with our mother church. St. Athanasius Church is in the midst of serving as a pilot parish (one of 14) in the Telos Project aimed at ministry with young adults. There is very much to be highly regarded and emulated among the work and ministry of St. Athanasius Church. The tedious toilsome task of debt retirement has not kept them from embracing their ministry in Nicholasville.

St. Cyprian of Carthage Church, Midlothian/Richmond, Virginia

The faithful who are gathering under the heavenly intercession of the Hieromartyr Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, continue to grow into and out of their permanent temple constructed ten years ago. Like other parishes in our Diocese, St. Cyprian sees regular growth from seekers and Catechumens, but the bulk of recent growth has been from Orthodox Christians living in or moving to the area and pleased to find an active Parish. Archpriest David Arnold, also serving as the Dean of the Appalachian Deanery, is assisted by Archpriest Mark Hodal, who is recovering from a very necessary hip replacement surgery. Fr. Mark is the Bread Chef for Can-Can Restaurant, a favorite French Brassiere in the Carytown area of Richmond. His vital presence was made more evident when his post operative rehabilitation kept him away from service of the Holy Mysteries. While Fr. Samuel Gantt lives in Roanoke, VA and is primarily serving the St. Ambrose of Milan Mission in retirement, he is attached to St. Cyprian and meets regularly with Fr. David for coordination of the Mission. A new and very welcome component of the Parish is that of the Diakonia. For the past 18 months, Fr. Deacon John (Charles) Hedrick has capably learned the liturgical role of Deacon and has greatly assisted the priestly ministry through prison visitation and visitation of those who are hospitalized or home bound. A recent addition to the Diocese of the South and the Parish is Fr. Deacon David Phelps and his family who are just getting settled after moving from “Northern Virginia” and 10 years of Diakonia at St. Mark Church, Bethesda, MD. Entering into Plan/Build consultation for the additional support structures of the campus master plan, the Parish will soon be in fund raising mode. While this plan is at or near the horizon, the Parish has graciously participated in Appalachian Deanery support and a significant effort to rehabilitate a homeless family, acting as their sole source of income for 7 months, assisting them to be on their own feet in a few more months.

Dormition of the Theotokos Church, Norfolk, Virginia

The faithful who are gathering under the heavenly intercessions of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary are also showing the growth and increase in outreach and ministry that comes from a newly renovated meeting place and more permanent presence in the Norfolk, Virginia metropolitan area. This building is now debt free due to faithful contributions. They look forward to the visit of His Eminence, Archbishop Alexander on their Altar Feast, August 15, 2019. While visiting, His Eminence will offer dedication prayers for the building and tonsure candidates for the lesser orders. Area clergy and faithful of the Deanery look forward to joining this festive event. The faithful of Dormition Church, in addition to their active liturgical life, support their community by assisting the local (Cathedral of the Annunciation) weekly community dinner for those experiencing food insecurity (St. Maria Skobtsova Community Dinner), as well as the Food Bank of Southeastern Virginia. Their outreach also includes assistance to abandoned and orphaned children in Uganda through the St. Nicholas Uganda Children's Fund. The presence and service of Dormition Church is thriving under the energetic service of Priest John Cox, Matushka Sunny and their family. While the pastoral ministry of Fr. John is evident in the life of the Parish, his love for academic pursuit is leading to the shared development of an Orthodox Journal, soon to be published.

St. Herman of Alaska Mission (Currently Inactive)

Occasionally receiving a phone call or email inquiring the status of the Mission, the Appalachian Deanery hopes to find a few families in the Charlottesville, VA area to restart the inactive St. Herman of Alaska Mission. Through the prayers of Father Herman, Elder and Wonderworker of Alaska and All America, O Christ Our God, gather your flock in the area of Charlottesville who would desire to form a Mission.

St. Maria of Paris Mission, Cleveland, Tennessee

The faithful who are gathering under the heavenly intercession of St. Maria of Paris continue to grow and explore their options for a permanent location in Cleveland, Tennessee. While working outside the Church to fully support his family, Priest Kevin Rigdon and Matushka Niki tirelessly serve this growing mission in a college town (Lee University) that continues to show interest in the Orthodox Christian Faith. Just days prior to the convocation of the Diocese of the South in Jupiter, Florida, the St. Maria of Paris Mission will celebrate their Altar Feast and ask for discernment from the Holy Spirit as they consider vacant land with frontage on a busy four lane highway in a growing community of Cleveland, TN. Under Fr. Kevin's leadership, the mission has creatively shed its skin while growing through several partitions of a storefront building and now potentially growing out of their current rented space. The possibility of purchasing land is an exciting step to contemplate, but

many contingencies make such a step seem as though treading through quick setting concrete. Many reading this report can understand the situation and should offer their experience and wisdom to Fr. Kevin at this assembly.

Protection of the Holy Virgin Mary Mission, Clarksville, Tennessee

Those who are gathering under the heavenly intercessions and protection of the Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary are near the return of their Priest Thomas Langdon, who as recipient of a 2018 Lilly Endowment National Clergy Renewal Program Grant has been on a sabbatical leave and pilgrimage with Matushka Sarah to the British Isles and Orthodox points of interest among those verdant fields, forests, and foothills. The mission has continued while Fr. Thomas is away under the loving care of Archpriest Peter Dubinin and occasional service of Deanery clergy. This awarded grant was well deserved as Fr. Thomas and his family worked with the devoted faithful to see the Mission make a move from rented space to land of their own, and a wonderfully self renovated meeting place, a house for the priest, and land enough to build a permanent Temple on the expanding western suburbs of Clarksville, TN and Fort Campbell, KY. The Mission has continued to grow with seekers and Catechumens, and will undoubtedly benefit from the reinvigorated service of the Langdon's.

St. Tikhon Mission, Chattanooga, Tennessee

The faithful who are gathering under the heavenly intercession of Saint Tikhon, Patriarch and Confessor of Russia, Apostle to America, Wonderworker, were just two years ago working hard to host the 2017 Annual Assembly without an assigned Priest. Now, Priest Seth Earl is for one full year assigned to the Mission and is capably shepherding the flock along with the support of Presbytera Stephanie. Fr. Jonas Worsham and Matushka Joan Marie are attached in retirement, owning and operating the Chattanooga version of the Bluegrass Grill (they also operated the same in Charlottesville, VA). A recent renovation of the meeting place has increased the size of the Nave and contributed to the functions of fellowship and instruction as the Mission grows. The pictures on their website from Holy Week and Pascha show a full and energetic Church, longer line of those vested in procession, and beautiful celebration of the Resurrection. While superlatives may seem to come cheaply after several paragraphs of a report, the thanks and appreciation for those who have served and still faithfully serve this Mission are heartfelt and full. There is much still to be accomplished, but the accomplishments must be affirmed and celebrated in this case. Many years, Fr. Seth and the faithful of St. Tikhon Mission!