

# Atlanta Deanery 2013 Assembly Reports

Fr. Alexander Fecanin

✠ *St. John the Wonderworker Church in Atlanta, and the Atlanta Deanery mourns the passing of Fr. Jacob Myers on January 16, 2013.*

*May his memory be eternal!*

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## St. Mary of Egypt Church, Norcross, GA

Submitted by Archpriest Peter Smith

St. Mary of Egypt Orthodox Church has continued to receive new faithful and at the same time say goodbye to folks who have been with us for some time. We have celebrated 5 weddings since August 2012; Baptized 18 faithful into Orthodoxy and have sent 2 dear souls to their reward. Our Pascha celebration this year was punctuated by 5 souls Baptized Holy Saturday morning, and a family of 3 Baptized the following Sunday morning. We presently have 4 catechumens.

The Atlanta area Clergy Brotherhood – and certainly our Diocese of the South -- is without our dear Brother, Fr. Jacob Myers. Our entire city is not quite the same without him, and it will take some time for us to come back to normal. Adding to that is the lingering lack of a Diocesan Hierarchy specifically for our Diocese. His Eminence Dmitri's memory is ever with us, as is Fr. Jacob's. We indeed carry on.

Our newly resurfaced parking lot has an added deceleration lane, definitely making our entrance safer and much more attractive – with our new sign welcoming everyone. Our 3 healthy children [Missions in **Gainesville – Sts. Peter & Paul** and **Montgomery – The Holy Myrrhbearing Women**; along with the **Mission Station in Marietta, GA. – St. Basil Outreach Center** are doing well. Serving these missions as well as here at home are the Hieromonk Cyprian and Fathers Dimitri Oselinsky, Thomas Alessandrone and Paul Burholt – and we are all deftly guided by our dear Deacon Lazarus Muska. Fr. Tom is serving in Fr. Jacob's place at St. John the Wonderworker. Metro Atlanta is indeed alive and well.

## **St. Innocent Orthodox Church, Macon GA**

### **Submitted by Fr. Theophan Buck**

Since our last report the most notable thing about St. Innocent Church is that we have begun to grow. We currently have a regular attendance of around 50 people and at times this swells to 70 or so. 50 people may sound small but only a year ago the numbers were more like 35 and on a full Sunday maybe 50. Even summer attendance has been substantially better than previous years. Along with the growth in membership we are seeing a steady stream of visitors and inquirers. It seems that God is always sending people to us.

One of the most notable events since the last report is that on Holy Saturday we received 6 adults into the Church by Baptism. Aside from growth in membership this past October we had our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Bible and Barbeque with guest speaker Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon. At this event we offer free food, church tours and a guest speaker. This year we served around 200 people. One of the families that visited our parish for this event was received into the Church this past Holy Saturday. In the middle of Lent we had a wonderfully enriching Lenten retreat with Mother Barbara from the Monastery of the Transfiguration. Another prominent event was the completion and publishing of our short 15 minute documentary about our parish which has had over 3000 views since it was published in February 2013.

The day to day ministries of the parish also continue. Church school is still going well and is divided into three groups. The prison ministry still meets weekly at Central State Prison in Macon. In prison we have 2 catechumens and 4 Orthodox Christians and our typical gathering has around 10 attendees. OCF has gone dormant (all our students graduated). 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." So far we have interviewed two iconographers. The Cemetery Committee is working towards the ultimate goal of establishing a small parish cemetery on our land. The ever-active Outreach Committee brainstorms and executes ideas related to evangelizing our local area

## **St. Mary Magdalene Parish**

### **Rincon, Georgia**

The parish membership is composed of 40 adults and 13 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, Moliemens 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 130 bags of food over the last 18 months.

In order to bring in extra income for the parish, on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month we offer the following items for sale: pierogies, nutrolls, cabbage rolls, jams, baby bibs, handcream, soap, dog biscuits and cat treats, 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. 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 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 11 members (8 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, they are seeking to obtain another large doublewide which they will refurbish and install at the back of the parish property, which would then be used as the Residence for the Priest and his family. They would also be able to offer a small monthly stipend.

Submitted by Fr. James (Bohlman)

Rector

St. Mary Magdalene Church

## **HOLY MYRRHBEARERS ORTHODOX MISSION**

### **MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA**

Holy Myrrhbearers Mission gathers 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 11 adults and 5 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: Holy Epiphany, 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 8 to 12 people and at the Sunday Divine Liturgy, 10 to 14 people. Everyone receives the Holy Sacrament of Communion at every Liturgy. All participate in the Sacrament of Confession regularly.

This past year we have acquired a portable icon screen that serve extremely well as an iconostas. We presently have two large icons on the screen

(Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Theotokos), and we are hoping to eventually purchase six more icons of the same dimensions. We have also purchased a high standing table that serves as the Table of Oblation and a new censer stand.

We were blessed this year to have Paul and Nancy Hannan and their 5 children join our Mission Church. They came to Montgomery from Alaska. Nancy is an experienced choir director and the whole family is very well versed in Orthodox liturgical music. Our choir has immensely improved under Nancy's direction.

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,

Father Dimitri Oselinsky

## **St. Gregory the Theologian Church**

### **Moundville, AL (Tuscaloosa)**

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.

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 that will need to be replaced, (we plan on replacing them with the new duct less units like the ones we installed in the chapel.)

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. Our bookstore is also online, and we invite everyone to visit it at [stgregoryoca.org](http://stgregoryoca.org)

St. Gregory's is located 25 minutes from the University of Alabama campus; we send out letters to new Orthodox students encouraging them 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 mean most of our attendance for Saturday Vespers and Sunday Liturgy.

Last year, St. Gregory received two new infants thru Holy Baptism and Holy Chrismation. We also united one couple in Holy Matrimony.

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

In Christ

Fr. Demetrius

## **St. Symeon the New Theologian Church**

### **Birmingham, AL**

St. Symeon's celebrated its 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in October 2012. We were joined in the celebration by Fr. Jacob Myers, of blessed memory, who was our keynote speaker and brought many precious relics of the Saints to St. Symeon's, including the cassock of St. John of San Francisco. Several of our members travelled to St. John's to sing for Fr. Jacob's funeral. God rest his soul!

Sacraments: Baptisms since the last Assembly: 5 adult and 11 children (3 infants). There was one Sacrament of Holy Matrimony.

There are 6 Catechumens and a several other inquirers.

St. Symeon's Choir produced two new CD recordings: *Come Bless the Lord* is a compilation of various Russian liturgical hymns in English, including five pieces arranged in English for the first time.

The second CD, *Paraklysis*, is the Supplicatory Canon to the Most-Holy Theotokos in Byzantine Chant (English).

The past 18 months, St. Symeon's has been in the planning stages for the construction of a new temple. We hope for construction to commence in the near future.

Submitted by Fr. Alexander Fecanin

**St. Luke Orthodox Mission**  
**Anniston, Alabama**  
**Fr. Basil Henry, Priest-in-charge**

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. This year we Baptized and Chrismated four Catechumens and have added several newly-discovered Greek and Russian faithful already living here in Anniston. It is a surprise and a joy to have an average of seven or eight servers assisting at the altar each Sunday morning. Our number of communicants has arisen to 50 and regular attendance is very encouraging, especially at the often neglected service of Great Vespers. Coffee hour has grown to overflow our dining area and thanks to the warm and friendly atmosphere the faithful hang around for a substantial time allowing our many children time to play together with frequently exuberant enthusiasm.

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 is currently an in-depth study of the Divine Liturgy. Earlier this year we completed our long and extensive course on the Book of Acts.

A special focus this year has been the development of a vigorous and lively Sunday School program. Our work in this area had previously been basic and intermittent. Now is a strong part of the Church life of our youth. Several teachers have volunteered and produced a great program of instruction in the Holy Scriptures, the liturgical life of the Church and rather creative arts and crafts. One of our members is adept at the craft of weaving various types of baskets and has begun teaching our youth to make their own. I pointed out the importance of this practice in the lives of the Desert Fathers. Now a number of our adults want to be instructed in the ancient craft so conducive to quiet prayer and meditation.

We were blessed this year with the donation of a beautiful seven branch candle stand for the altar and a podium for the reading of the Holy Gospel. Another special donation is enabling us to acquire wooden torches for the altar servers to employ during Divine Services. The number of icons adorning the interior of the temple have been greatly increased to well over a hundred. A new handwritten icon of the Apostle Paul, by Fr. Jerome Sanderson, arrived just this week. We have also expanded our flowerbeds

and landscaping around the Church greatly enhancing the Temple's exterior beauty.

We continue our outreach to the surrounding community and to nearby Jacksonville State University and ask your prayers for our labors in this little corner of The Lord's Vineyard.

Glory to God for all things.

Fr. Basil Henry