

South Central (Dallas) Deanery
Diocese of the South
Report for 2008 Assembly
Dallas, TX

Territory Covered:

The South Central Deanery includes parishes, missions and institutions in 6 states: Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Numerically and geographically this is the largest Deanery in the Diocese.

Since the last Diocesan Assembly, Archpriest Basil Zebrun stepped down as dean to devote more time to his growing parish. His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri appointed Archpriest Joseph Fester dean. The clergy of the South Central deanery are grateful for the dedicated service of Father Basil while dean of the deanery.

New Mission Efforts Within The Deanery:

Exploratory work and meetings are taking place within the following cities to facilitate the establishment of new communities:

Alpine, Texas: Population, 5,786 people. Median Age, 34 years. Served by Deanery Clergy. Alpine is located in mountainous, far west Texas and is the County Seat of Brewster County. Several Orthodox families, some having connections and past memberships with other Diocesan Churches, have asked for the Diocese to investigate the possibilities for an Alpine Mission. An initial organizational meeting was convened with approximately a dozen people present. The first Liturgy in Alpine was served earlier this year and plans are being formulated for monthly services starting in July. Discussions have also begun on the donation of land for mission or a monastic community.

Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Population, 224,097 people. Median Age, 30 years. Served by clergy of the DOS. Baton Rouge is the Capital of Louisiana. The mission-station recently moved into new rented facilities with better visibility with help from a Priest Justin Patterson and members of his parish in Oak Ridge, TN. Priest Matthew Jackson from McComb, MS assists the mission-station on a monthly basis as well as other clergy who travel to Baton Rouge to celebrate the Liturgy including at Pascha. Mark Christian serves as the lay leader for the mission-station and continues his studies in the OCA Late Vocations program.

Kerrville, Texas: Population, 20,425 people. Median Age, 45 years. Served by Priest Paul Burholt. The town is 58 miles Northwest of San Antonio and 85 miles West of Austin. Served by Priest Paul Burholt. The mission-station named for The Protecting Veil of the Most Holy Theotokos, is a small but generous group of faithful meeting in a house chapel of one of the congregation. A relationship between the mission-station and the new mission-station in Alpine, TX has been spiritually beneficial to both communities.

Victoria, Texas: Population 60,603 people and the County Seat of Victoria County. Served by Archpriest Dmitry Cozby. Located 30 miles from the Gulf of Mexico and is 2 hours from Corpus Christi, Houston, San Antonio, and Austin. Served by Archpriest Dimitri Cozby. In the past year the mission-station acquired 99 acres of land near Victoria. Draft plans for a temple are being finalized for presentation to His Eminence. The future looks bright, by God's grace for spreading the Gospel in Victoria - one of Texas fastest growing cities.

St. Francisville, LA: Population 1,789 Median Age 34. Serviced by Priest Matthew Jackson. This mission outreach is being done by Fr. Matthew Jackson in McComb, MS. Monthly vespers and education is conducted. Members of Fr Jackson's parish in St Francisville are the nucleus for this mission-station.

Hattiesburg, MS: Population 48,012. Median Age 27.1. Serviced by Priest Matthew Jackson. An OCF outreach to the University of South Mississippi by Fr. Matthew Jackson has been established. It is hoped that this effort may bear fruit in the future in planting a mission in Hattiesburg. In the meantime, parishioners from Fr Jackson's mission in McComb are assisting in the development of the OCF and other outreach efforts.

Round Rock, TX: Population 92,000. Median Age 30.1. Serviced by Priest Thomas Ledford. A group of Orthodox contacted the DOS last year about the possibility of starting a mission-station outreach to the North Austin, TX area. Mission Director Father Ted Pisarchuk visiting the group and since then they are having weekly Sunday evening Vespers.

Parishes and Missions within the Deanery (Highlights):

ARKANSAS:

SS. George and Alexandra Mission, Fort Smith. Founded 1996. Archpriest John Maxwell and Priest Paul Fetsko. A spirit of greater love in the parish is one of the important highlights to share with all of you this year. The pews were removed from the church, which caused a bit of discomfort, but we appear to be well past this as the spirit of love mentioned above bears witness. We are working on several projects, one being a new Divine Liturgy book for congregational use. The book, based on the translation of Archbishop Dimitri, will also contain commentaries on the Liturgy. Plans for similar Vespers and Matins books are underway. We are also producing a membership guide, which contains a directory with photos, and helpful information about what it means to be a member and how to live out an Orthodox life. This is

almost ready to produce for the parish. The addition of Priest Paul Fetsko here has been a great help especially with some recent health issue faced by Father Maxwell. We continue with our major iconography project with John Lickwar from St. Cyril's in The Woodlands, TX writing the icons.

MISSISSIPPI:

Christ the Savior Mission, McComb. Founded 2004. Priest Matthew Jackson; By God's grace, it has been another good year in the life of our small mission in Mississippi. The community of McComb is still getting used to an Orthodox presence, though we've had several opportunities to have sizable numbers of local non-Orthodox visitors at services, which we pray will help serve to de-mystify the Orthodox Christian Church. God continues to bless our growth—since the last Diocesan Assembly we have added 4 by baptism and chrismation, as well as 1 who have moved into the area. We currently have 5 catechumens, with potentially several others visiting with us on a regular basis. At this time we count approximately 40 total members, including children and catechumens. This past year Vladyka blessed several outreach mission stations from our parish—one in St. Francisville, LA under the protection of St. John the Apostle; another in Hattiesburg, MS which is an OCF/mission station under the protection of the Holy Cross. Both outreaches are growing—there are 3 catechumens in St. Francisville and 1 in Hattiesburg. We are very blessed to be in this place, with the opportunity to share the fullness of the Orthodox Faith with those around us. Glory to God for all things!

Holy Resurrection Church, Clinton/Jackson. Founded 1977. Archpriest Paul Yerger. Herein is the report from Father Paul Yerger..."Since the last Assembly a new dome was installed on the Church and the Church was consecrated last September. We had Fr. David Rucker speak here in November and Mother Magdalena from Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City in February. During this period I baptized three children and chrismated two children and five adults. I now have two adult catechumens and five or more seekers who attend regularly. We had three previously inactive Orthodox restored to membership and two Orthodox from elsewhere move here. The latter are Subdeacon Peter and Anita McLeod from Santa Fe, who have been a great blessing - thanks to Fr. George Sondergaard for this gift. We had one couple move away, one individual apostasize, two burials, and one young man who has gone to try his vocation at a monastery. We average 70-80 at Sunday Liturgy and have 107 members who attend to some degree. The Church funded nine young people to go to camp this summer at Antiochian Village. I am completely retired from my secular job, although I may do a little ad hoc work for them as needed. We have a very close relationship with the three other Orthodox Churches in the Jackson area, two Antiochian and one Greek. The clergy have a standing lunch once a month and we do many activities together, such as an outdoor Blessing of Water at a nearby reservoir the Sunday after Theophany, Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers, and Agape Vespers and feast on the afternoon of Pascha."

NEW MEXICO:

All Saints of North America Mission, Albuquerque. Founded 1979. Archpriest George Sondergard. Fr George continues to labor with great dedication although health issues have forced him to cut back his normal pastoral schedule. The mission was grateful that Priest John Filopovich helped serve the many of the liturgical services during Holy Week and Pascha and also Pentecost this year.

St. Dmitri of Rostov Mission. Founded 1990. Priest John Hennies . We have completed a remodel of St Dimitri Mission with new space for worship. This change brings us much better lighting, a new Iconostasis and altar area as well as significant additional space for the congregation. During this process we have also improved our kitchen facilities and created a comfortable parish hall. New parking and paving has been created. There is now adequate signage with hours of services. St Dmitri Mission provides a one-week icon workshop at Santa Fe College which attracts up to twenty participants who work under the supervision of a professional iconographer. We sponsor a Blini Brunch before Lent with tours of the church for those who have never seen an Orthodox Church. Attendance at this event grows each year. The congregation has sponsored a thirty-minute weekly radio program by Fr John which features Orthodox liturgical music and a short meditation. At present we are in the process of dealing with an architect to create a bell tower and a dome to add to our building. There have been four Christmations during this past year, and we have begun to form a choir to lead our congregational singing. Adult education follows each Divine Liturgy and there are presently several people who have expressed interest in becoming members of the Orthodox Church.

St. Michael's Skete, Canoñes. Founded in 1993. Hieromonk John (Anderson). (See separate report from the Skete)

OKLAHOMA:

Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church, Hartshorne. Founded 1897. Archpriest Joseph Nelson. Located in rural and mountainous Southeast Oklahoma, Sts. Cyril and Methodius is the oldest community in the Diocese, having a beautiful and traditional Church with three onion domes, a modern parish hall, a rectory and over seven acres of land.

Holy Apostles Mission, Bixby, OK. Founded 2004. Priest Ambrose Arrington. The mission has now moved into their new chapel with icons being written by Vladimir Gygorenko. A parish center with fellowship, education and office space for Fr Arrington is also now on site. The mission continues to grow. with 20 received into the mission in the past two years. Four more are scheduled to be received before the end of 2008. A playground for children and a belltower (no bells yet). Youth group this summer. His Eminence is scheduled to bless/consecrate the new chapel later this year.

TEXAS:

St. Seraphim of Sarov Cathedral, Dallas. Founded 1954. Archbishop Dmitri (Royster) Archpriest Joseph Fester, Priest John Anderson. This, the largest Church in the Deanery and the Diocesan See, continues to be a focal point for mission and education. It continues to be a source of inspiration as well for Diocesan clergy and laity. Daily Reader Vespers are conducted each weekday except Wednesday when Daily Vespers are celebrated. The once monthly Slavonic and Spanish Liturgies continue to be celebrated. We are grateful to Priest Justin Fredericks and His Eminence who respectively serve these services. The inner adornment of the Cathedral with murals by Iconographer Vladimir Grygorenko is now finished. The narthex will be completed at a later date. A Church Singing Workshop was held last October and by the response the Cathedral hopes to make this an annual event for the faithful of the deanery.

A successful Church School year was completed with lesson plans from the OCA Department of Christian Education used. Nearly 50 children were enrolled in this year's Church School.

A lenten retreat led by Abbot Jonah (Paffhausen) was also held which was received with great enthusiasm. Due to flooding, the Cathedral office and entry needed to be gutted and rebuilt.

The Cathedral continues to attract new members through relocations to Dallas, receptions into the Orthodox faith and of course, baptisms of babies!

St. Paul the Apostle Mission, Denison/Sherman. Founded 2003. Priest Michael Storozuk. The temple was consecrated on August 25, 2007. Since the last Assembly 5 new members have been Christmated with a steady stream of new inquirers. Average Sunday attendance is now over 30 and on June 8 the mission will vote to proceed with the construction of a parish center.

St. Maximus the Confessor Mission, Denton. Founded 2001. Priest Justin Fredericks. The mission continues to grow and take the next steps in their development. The first stage of a new church design was completed by Andrew Gould (who designed Holy Ascension in Mt. Pleasant, SC) Attendance continues to grow to its highest levels over the past year. The focus on worship with weekday services is bearing fruit as the community seeks to deepen its faith and spiritual life. We ask for your prayers as we seek God's will in the timing of our next development steps to better serve the needs of the faithful and share the Faith.

St. Barbara Mission, Ft. Worth. Founded 1978. Archpriest Basil Zebrun. The members of St. Barbara Orthodox Church in Ft. Worth, having settled into their new all purpose facility, are preparing for several summer and fall events, and are working toward some longer range goals.

Two catechumens will be received into the Church on Pentecost. In July a parish picnic will be held and a presentation on Orthodox Iconography and Architecture will be given the following weekend by Presbytera Anca Mirela Tudora who is herself an Iconographer and Architect. In September the community is planning to host an Open House to introduce neighbors to Orthodoxy. It is also hoped that by the end of September one of two construction loans taken out by the parish will be paid off by gifts and friendly loans from parishioners and friends. This will take the community one step closer to making their priest full time at St. Barbara's. In addition, the parish is slowly beginning to gather ideas for the design of a permanent/traditional Church which is to be constructed on the east side of the Altamesa property. Preparations are also being made for the November 7th and 8th Old Country Christmas Fall Festival, a unique fund raiser which has always functioned as a type of Open House event. And then finally the parish is delighted to have three men who plan to attend Seminary at different times during the next five years, and one who, having graduated St. Vladimir's, will be finishing up his Ph.D. from Notre Dame next May.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem, Houston. Founded 2005. Priest Basil Biberdorf. The mission here continues to grow: spiritually and numerically. In recent months, we have been surprised by the number of new community contacts (calls, visits, website traffic) received as a result of installing larger, but still temporary, signs and banners. We currently have one family of catechumens (two adults, two children), with two other regular inquirers. Parish fellowship events, such as the gathering on Pascha afternoon following vespers (including swimming, potluck meal, and lots of fellowship), continue to be a large draw, regularly attracting several families who are not yet members of our parish. The inactivation of the Archangel Michael mission in Humble has added seven new individuals (five families) to our parish, and they all report positive experiences at St Cyril, in spite of the sadness concerning St Michael.

During this past year, we held children's church school on Wednesdays, from 5:15 to 6:15pm with a light meal. It was a successful effort, with as many as 15 children present during any given session. (This is a large number considering our typical Sunday attendance of 40.) Our focus this year was on the lives of the Old Testament patriarchs in Genesis and Exodus, with occasional breaks to discuss St Nicholas and some of the special days in Great Lent and Holy Week.

This year has also seen the completion of the four main icons in our beautiful iconostasis. In addition to icons of Christ and the Theotokos, we now have icons of our patron, St Cyril of Jerusalem, as well as St Macrina the Younger (the Teacher; the influential sister of Ss. Basil the Great, Peter of Sebaste, Gregory of Nyssa, and Theosebia the Deaconess). All the icons were painted by our resident iconographer, John Lickwar. Our website, stcyril.us, has photographs of the icons and iconostasis along with other events and people in the mission.

For the coming year, we plan to continue exploring our outreach in this area. Fr Basil recently increased his secular work hours, which will likely reduce the amount of time spent in contact

with the community. Nonetheless, we pray for God's continued blessing on this vineyard as we work to spread the Gospel in north metropolitan Houston.

St. George the Great Martyr Church, Pharr/McAllen. Founded 1979. Priest Antonio Perdomo. After Pascha of 2007 when 4 adults were received into the church, Two adults were received through Chrismation in July, two adults and three children for Nativity. Two children were baptized in July and two more during Lent before Pascha of 2008. This being a total of four adults and seven children were baptized or chrismated after the the 2007 Paschal Season. A total of 13 people were received into the Church for 2007 at St. George were , plus two more baptized this year. There have also been two weddings and one funeral. The Church of St. George continued in it's effort to aid the mission work in Mexico. So far over 50 boxes of icons, vestments and other religious items have been delivered to the Cathedral of the Ascension of our Lord in Mexico City. St. George's Food Pantry served a Total of 9,501 individuals in 2007. This means 2,306 Families or 4,807 Adults and 4,694 Children. The Food Pantry continues to serve those in need this year. St. George's Sponsored a successful third annual after Nativity Youth Retreat with Fr. Joseph Honeycutt serving as the retreat master. Several participants also attended the St. Peter the Aleut Camp. A new play set was donated and built on the property for all the children to use.

St. Sava Mission, Plano. Founded 1988. Priest Seraphim Hipsh. By the Grace of God and through the prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos, St. Sava, Archbishop of Serbia, and His Eminence, Archbishop DMITRI, St. Sava's continues to seek to be a light to the cities of Plano and Allen, TX. This past year has seen steady growth within the community both numerically and spiritually. We have maintained a consistent liturgical schedule, and we have worked to strengthen our church school program and put in place a youth program. Our choir continues to improve through regular rehearsals and consistent liturgical participation. In addition, we completed the purchase of 7 acres of land and are in the final process of selling off 3 acres to increase cash flow for our building program. In the coming year, we look to continue to focus on education with further development in the church school, youth program, and adult education as well as initiate a college ministry within the local area. By God's grace, we also look to initiate the building of a new temple on our new property by the end of the year.

St. Anthony the Great Church, San Antonio. Founded 1979. Priest Leo Poore and Priest Thomas Ledford. The Church continued its beautification project and the new iconostasis was blessed by His Eminence, Archbishop Dmitri since the last DOS Assembly.

St John Damascus, Tyler. Reactivated in 2006. Priest John Mikita. The mission received it's first priest, Fr John Mikita this Winter. We were immediately able to begin building our regular liturgical and educational life together. Our temporary location has received several tweaks that make it feel more like home. Meanwhile the land upon which we hope to build in the next couple

years has been cleared of brush and is looking phenomenal. We began our first "on site" catechumenate this spring and have three catechumens.

St. Michael the Archangel Mission, Houston. Founded 1982. Temporarily Inactive