

Central Florida Deanery Report--2017 Diocesan Assembly

The Central Florida Deanery covers the northern geographical half of the great state of Florida and consists of six parishes, three missions and a mission station, with two more missions expected in the next 12 months. Overall things continue to do well in the deanery—overall income and attendance continues to be up, existing facilities continue to be improved and one mission is looking to buy property.

Annunciation Russian Mission, Jacksonville, FL (2012)

Hieromonk Arkady (Migunov) *Priest-in-Charge*

Annunciation is the first intentional Russian Mission plant to the best of our knowledge in the OCA and it is doing remarkably well. Services are in Slavonic. They have long outgrown their present 2500sf multiuse facility and have been shopping hard for a new church and/or property. They have identified a parcel south of the city where they are doing due diligence. Attendance is stable and income is strong. They have done an excellent job of building their cash reserves. Hieromonk Arkady also travels once a month to serve in Orlando at St Stephen's where we anticipate planting a second Russian Church this fall. (See St. Stephen's report). Fr Arkady also serves in Gainesville once per month at St Elizabeth Greek church on Saturday's.

St. Alexis Mission, Palm Coast, FL (1995)

Served by area Clergy

Services are celebrated both in English and Slavonic. Fr Nicholas Harris, who is retired, has been serving the community regularly. He drives two hours one-way every week to celebrate the Sunday Liturgy. Beginning Holy Week Fr Nick has had some significant health issues related to knee surgery. Working with Fr Nick this fall we anticipate a transition of some sort, including ultimately locating a permanent facility.

St Andrew the First Called, New Port Richey, FL (1976)

Priest Patrick Smith, *Rector*

St. Andrews has grown 20% this year and have outgrown their building. Due to the immediate need for more space and that raising enough monies in the short term to buy new property and build a new church is feasible, they are making plans to add on to their existing facility. They have had engineering done, hired a contractor and are in the process of obtaining the necessary permits needed to expand their present facility, which will add a new larger parish hall, a larger worship space, a proper narthex, and 2 new classrooms. To do this they have leased a parking lot across the street, since there is not enough parking on their own property. A major focus continues to be on the parish's children. Next year they will have classes for 5 different age groups as well as active middle and high school youth groups. They have 10 catechumens and 6 active inquirers. Just a few years ago there were calls to close this parish.

St. Justin Martyr, Jacksonville, FL (1994)

Archpriest Theodore Pisarchuk, *Rector*

This year St. Justin's added a 1200 sf pavilion behind the fellowship hall to function as an overflow for area for coffee hour, for extra Sunday school space, and to be a place to get out of the sun for picnics. SJM is in their second year of our iconography program with about 84% of the icons have been pledged and 50% installed. It is hoped to be finished by Pascha 2018. At the beginning of 2015 the community launched an Mortgage Principal Paydown Program and to date the principal has been reduced by an additional \$51,000. In May, a parishioner was ordained to the Holy Diaconate, for which the community is very grateful.

St Mark, Bradenton, FL (1979)

Priest John Chudick, *Rector*

Highlighting the year was their Senior Warden embracing the monastic life. The community is focusing on strengthening the work and relationships within the Parish Council. They held a Parish Council Retreat, which included speakers about Liturgical Music and Lay Ministry. The Youth Education Program continues to grow. The parish also hopes soon to increase their compensation for Fr. John, so that he may reduce his need to work outside the Parish.

St Philip the Apostle Mission, Tampa FL (2005)

Priest Joseph Ciarciaglino *Priest-in-Charge*

Tampa was the third hardest hit in the country during the past recession, has at last seen the beginning of an economic upturn. Parishioners are no longer leaving Area in search of employment. People are now moving into Tampa, including Orthodox Christians. Services are well attended.

Economic outreach continues to be a prime goal of the parish. St. Philip's spends at least ten percent of their income on direct charitable undertakings as well as having raised an additional \$1,750.00 for charity through two special collections so far, this year. They have a weekly food drive, and collect of baby items for mothers who have chosen not to have an abortion. The parish continues to grow and do well. A touchstone of this community is the work of Akonyibedo Health Center in Northern Uganda (<http://www.ugandaclinic.org/>). They support it directly through parishioner donations and through solicitation of outside sources, the medical center in Northern Uganda.

St. Raphael Orthodox Church, Inverness, FL (2002)

Igumen Sergious (Gerken), *Rector*

St. Raphael has been a very busy parish. They have a full schedule of services throughout the week. They continue to make improvements to their facilities and grounds. The parish consists of mostly retired folk, and Fr Sergious makes regular visits to the homebound and infirmed. Church school is active and well received. This retirement age community, does NOT act retired-but is busy, busy, busy. Fr Sergious serves Vespers in nearby The Villages twice a month and there is a mission opportunity there at some time in the future. The dynamics are complex since so many parishioners of St. Raphael live in The Villages, but they see this on the horizon.

St. Simeon Church, Titusville, FL (1966)

Priest Krist Nickolas, *Priest-in-Charge*

Things are mostly unchanged at St. Simeon's. Fr Krist has had some health struggles as of late. Aging demographics continue to be the biggest challenge for St. Simeon. Every year the parish takes a small amount of money from their savings to meet their expenses. With exception of just a few, most members are retired.

St Stephen Orthodox Church, Orlando, FL. (1969)

Priest Daniel Hickman, *Acting Rector*

St. Stephen's and Fr Dan are busy with two notable local mission efforts. First, in February a well-attended South Orlando Mission Formation Meeting was held. Fr Dan is strategically daughtering/hiving off a church community for South Orlando. They now meet regularly for Vespers and are collecting funds. An enthusiastic mission minded priest is needed.

Secondly, St Stephen's has been undergirding Fr Arkady's seven or so year Russian Mission work in Orlando. Fr Arkady has grown a strong core group of nearly 30 people with, the vast majority unaffiliated with St. Stephen's. In April, we had a Mission Formation Meeting and collected about \$34k in commitments. A priest has been identified, Fr Andrey Syrkin, who is attached to the Diocese of Canada and is awaiting a Religious Worker Visa to come to Orlando with his family. Once he arrives, the mission will be launched. This mission is being sponsored in part financially by Annunciation Russian Mission, St. Justin's and St. Stephen's. We will plant the mission using the same techniques that proved successful for Annunciation Russian Mission.

In other things St. Stephen's itself is doing very well—growing both numerically and financially, perhaps because of their focus on missions. They serve the local community through Ss Cosmas & Damian House and the Ephraim Project.