

South Florida Deanery – Annual Report 2013/14

Orthodox Cathedral of Christ the Saviour (Miami)

This past year, the Cathedral has continued its program of outreach to Southeast Florida. Our greeter program continues to have success in making visitors feel welcome, and ensuring another visit. Our website, designed to attract inquirers, continues to direct traffic from the web to our church edifice. We also joined with Santos Apostoles Mission for an Open House in February. Print and radio advertising invited locals to “see and experience the beauty of Orthodoxy.” A major attraction for outreach is the Orthodox Book Center, offering the best in Orthodox books, icons and gifts.

Education is a primary focus at the Cathedral. On a weekly basis, we offer two adult education classes and two Bible studies. In addition, we hosted our annual Lenten Retreat, where Bishop MARK of Philadelphia spoke on the formation of the canon of the Scriptures (accessible on our Ancient Faith Radio podcast “Living Waters”). Our Church School presently has three groups, divided by age, with about 5 children in each. As headquarters for the Miami Diaconal Formation Program (affiliated with St. Tikhon’s Seminary), we graduated our first class in May. Two parishioners from the Cathedral, and one from Ss. Peter and Paul graduated. St. Tikhon’s Seminary is placing the three diaconal programs on a one-year hiatus for restructuring. We will be taking new students in Fall 2015.

During the past year, we Baptized 6 children and 1 adult, and Chrismated 2 adults. We presently have 4 adult catechumens, and several regular inquirers. Our weekly attendance varies from 80 to 120 adults, with a sharp increase on Pascha. In recent years, we have witnessed a decrease in “snow birds,” and an increase in year-round residents. In addition, we continue to see more Eastern Europeans, primarily Romanians, Ukrainians and Russians. English continues to be the bridge between the immigrants, “cradle” American Orthodox, and converts.

An exciting activity in the life of the Cathedral is our ongoing construction project. We broke ground in April on an addition to our social hall. The new building is 3,200 square feet, and has 4 classrooms, 3 offices for clergy and secretary and a much larger bookstore. The original hall is also being renovated. The entire project is scheduled for completion before the end of summer.

--Fr. Philip Reese, Dean

--Fr. Joseph Lucas, Assoc. Dean

St. Demetrius Orthodox Church (Naples)

During the preceding year, St. Demetrius had 4 baptisms. Our attendance during the winter months stays about the same, in the 80 person range. Attendance during the summer has increased to around 40-45 on Sundays.

Our Ethnic Food Festival this year was the best so far with attendance around 1,200.

The demographics of the parish are changing slightly to include more Russians and Romanians.

The work on the iconostasis continues.

--Fr. Gleb McFatter

St. Peter the Apostle Orthodox Church (Jupiter)

St. Peter the Apostle Mission has, at the last look at our list of parishioners, about 55 souls in our care (we've had several new families move in and a few move out of town...and some declaring an intention to join the parish eventually). Our average Sunday attendance is, though, about 30-35 (dropping lower in Summer and rising in the Season) and we serve Great Vespers in parishioners' homes about twice a month. The average attendance of Great Vespers is about 6 people. We have a new baby to baptize and another family has come to the Church with the desire to baptize their child as well....so we have two upcoming baptisms. Most of our parish is not made up of "Snow Birds" and our membership reflects a mostly resident population (though our attendance still reflects a "seasonal" approach toward worship).

Though we have averaged about one or two catechumens a year, this year (2014) has been a "dry" period. We had a catechumen, but she has "disappeared" and has not answered queries. God willing, she will return. Technically, she is still on the books as a catechumen.

Our parish has participated in a few community service projects such as a National Beach Cleanup and Habitat For Humanity building projects. Fr. Philip Kontos serves as a Palm Beach County Sheriff's Chaplain as well.

Every Thursday we hold a public book study in a local bookstore coffee shop (on average about 6 people attend a week). On the third Thursday of the month we relax the bowstring and watch an edifying movie at Fr. Philip's home.

We continue to work on building camaraderie and fellowship with a monthly men's breakfast at a local "greasy spoon" and periodic picnics for the Church. The sisterhood has been participating in local craft fairs to help raise money for our building/relocation project.

We still search for a more permanent home for St. Peter's, but the search has been difficult. Currently, we continue to sojourn at the Lighthouse Elementary School.

--Fr. Philip Kontos

Holy Spirit Orthodox Church (Venice)

In the past year we had two infant baptisms, zero adult. I served two funerals, zero weddings. I have done zero Chrismations.

We have fundraisers throughout the winter months, usually from baked goods. Too much of our budget currently comes from fund raisers.

I held classes in the Fall months and pre-Lent. We served a full contingent of the normal services. Our parish council is functioning well and they are cooperative, helpful.

We do not have Sunday School, no children. Two teens.

Our choir is not good. We have no chanters. I have one sub-deacon. Demetrios Moussa—a very holy man from Egypt.

Our building program continues to move forward, hoping for a blessing from the ArchBishop while in Dallas.

We have raised \$100,000.00 for the expansion.

I am blessed to be the pastor of this flock.

--Fr. Stephen Lourie

St. James Orthodox Church (Port Saint Lucie)

By the grace of God our parish family has continued to work and to grow. New families have been added to our community and we have had one adult baptism and two adult chrismations so far this year and one catechumen. We are blessed with a wonderfully diverse and multi-ethnic family: Armenian, Egyptian, Greek, Lebanese, Russian, Siberian, Ukrainian, Uzbekistan and America converts with a Puerto Rican pastor. We share the diversity of these cultures as we praise God and love each other as Christ commands us. There are 71 voting members and Sunday attendance averages from 84 to 95.

Sadly two of our members: Constantine Vagionis fell asleep in the Lord in December, 2013, and Joyce Butala in January, 2014. Connie had been with us for approximately six years and was always very kind and loving. He was also a close personal friend. Joyce had been with us for over twenty years a mainstay of our parish and was always a very hard working and most

generous human being. She had been a member of the Sisterhood and held the offices of president and treasurer. May their memory be eternal.

On May 17 His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon, our Locum Tenens, concelebrated an Hierarchical Divine Liturgy together with His Eminence, Archbishop Alejo, Bishop of Mexico, seven priests and two deacons, and blessed our new iconostasis and the first phase of the iconography which blesses the sanctuary. At the beginning of this service John Westling was tonsured a reader for St. James. God Grant Him Many Years!

Our youth now numbers 19 from toddler to high school. Our Sunday school has been very successful and well attended. Our teen age group had a successful car wash and will be having another in October. Our first evening youth retreat took place during Great Lent. Our youth group coordinators are planning a sleep over retreat/fun night in our church hall in the fall. On January 10, 11 & 12 we had our second Annual Festival. Although we only cleared approximately \$1,200.00 our major goals of parish participation and getting St. James known to the community were accomplished. The outreach portion of the festival are the tours and explanation of our new temple and the meaning of the iconostasis and iconography.

Our Brotherhood and Sisterhood work very hard each year to insure that the needs of the Church and parish grounds are met. We are also blessed to have two young ladies, one Alexandra Mamangakis, a college senior who instead of spending the traditional spring break partying, spent it volunteering her time and efforts in the Orthodox missions of Alaska. The second, Korinna Neveux, a high school junior, will be going to Nicaragua together with her mother, an optometrist, and their medical team to give free eye exams, medical help and bring toys and gifts for the young children. Axios! Axios! Axios!

--Fr. Ernesto Rios

Santos Apóstoles Mission (Miami)

has completed its second year of ministry by the grace of God. Over the past year we have had one baptism and four Chrismations, and we currently have two catechumens going through catechism, as well as several inquirers.

In addition to our Sunday divine liturgy at noon, which averages 17 in attendance, our weekday services and activities have included a season of Tuesday morning catechism classes at Starbucks, an evening class out of Fr. David and Mat' Natalia's home (during several of which classes parishioners were invited for supper), a Wednesday night catechism class and a Thursday night Bible study (these last two are preceded by Little Compline).

We have also attempted outreach in several ways: the neighborhoods immediately around Christ the Saviour Cathedral have been canvassed with flyers (and prayer requests have been taken from the inhabitants who answered our door knocking). The St. Nicholas Society, which Santos Apóstoles has founded to attempt to reach those who are in need of basic household items at an economical price, has endeavored to collect donations of these items and reach out through Craigslist to those in need. When people respond to the ministry of the St. Nicholas Society, we bless any items they purchase or take with a prayer and holy water, and an invitation to join us for worship and class. We have also attempted to reach out through an open house in cooperation with Christ the Saviour and an all-Spanish retreat in cooperation with Spanish-speaking priests in the area. The retreat marked the first, tri-jurisdictional, all-Spanish liturgy in South Florida. These events were advertised via the Internet, area radio stations, and newspapers.

We continue to face the challenge of financial viability, brought on in part by our small numbers, and in part by the faithful members' inability to give (and unfamiliarity with giving) to church due to their socio-economic level. Our average Sunday offering is \$78.00, and, indeed, that has been partially affected by losses we've experienced due to several former members' work situations (moved to other areas of the country or other countries).

In seeking to further the Church's outreach to Spanish-language parishes, we are currently working in cooperation with St. James parish in Port St. Lucie to begin formation of two Haitian gentlemen who are former Roman Catholic priests, with the eventual aim of sending them to seminary for ordination and service within the Church, either here or under His Eminence, Archbishop Alejo of Mexico City.

--Fr. David Wooten

St. Herman of Alaska Orthodox Church (Lake Worth)

This past year, our parish had three infant Baptisms, and 1 adult Chrismation. There has been an increase in children at the Divine Liturgy.

We have continued with our "Go Forth..." mail ministry; and our literature rack has been very successful as a form of outreach.

For fundraising, we have held food festivals monthly, except during the fasts. In addition, we have continued our charitable work of supporting Orthodox monasteries, the seminaries, and our Diocese of Alaska.

--Fr. Michael Zaparyniuk

Holy Cross Orthodox Church (Fort Meyers)

This past year we have received 4 new members, and added 1 child to the Church through Baptism. We have hosted three picnics during the year. And we have improved our facility by replacing the A/C.

--Fr. Leonid Palceski

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church (Fort Lauderdale)

From August 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014 we have had 27 Baptisms, 3 weddings and 5 funerals.

We recently completed a renovation of the property, buildings, landscaping, fencing and concrete wall. All of our electrical and plumbing have been brought up to current code.

Our spiritual growth is proceeding with a core membership of 100 families, with another 200 families present for major feasts and requesting sacraments such as Baptism, Pannikhidas, etc.

In November of this year I will celebrate 25 years at St. Nicholas. I pray that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will grant me continual privilege in serving the Holy Orthodox Church.

--Fr Kyrril Gvosdev

Ss. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church (Miami)

Currently, we have 23 members of our parish (no new members or Baptisms in the past year). We have 2 catechumens. We have greatly improved our physical property. We have replaced the icons of the iconostasis; replaced the roof over the vestibule; repaired and painted the vestibule and kitchen; added a new concrete walkway; and treated for termites.

--Fr. Alexander Padlo