

The Atlanta Deanery - 2018

Parish Report for St. Mary of Egypt Orthodox Church, Norcross, GA

St. Mary of Egypt Orthodox Church, in Norcross, GA, has continued its ministry to its longtime parishioners, catechumens, inquirers, and many visitors over the past year. By the time of the annual assembly, we will have celebrated 3 Baptisms, 1 Chrismation, and received 3 Ethiopians by confession of faith since the assembly in Chattanooga. Currently, we have 4 catechumens, and 3 inquirers. On the Feast of the Annunciation, Archbishop Alexander ordained Reader Thomas Hobbs to the subdiaconate, and tonsured Nicholas Romano as a reader. St. Mary's continues with a strong liturgical life.

Many updates and improvements on the aging grounds continue. We are currently renovating the playground and picnic areas, and restoring a retaining wall by the parking lot. A complete makeover of the bathrooms, which is long overdue, is about to begin as we now have the funds.

Among the important ministries at our parish is the the Shoes for School Program. Each year, St. Mary's raises funds, and distributes gift cards to several local schools in order for impoverished children to have new shoes to start the school year. This program has received much appreciation from the associated principals of these schools.

Our adult education is getting better participation than in past years. In particular, the book *Treasures in Earthen Vessels*, by Deacon Stephen Muse, prompted lively discussion.

Taylor Hostetter has continued, what has now become an annual ministry in Serbia. It is now known as the St. Pachomios Summer Institute, and had the blessings of Patriarch Irinej of Serbia and Patriarch Ilia of Georgia. This year the program, which involves high school students exploring their Orthodox faith, has expanded to include students from more nations. He has students attending from the United States, Russia, Ukraine, Romania, Georgia, and many Serbs.

We have also has women of the parish participating in prison ministry, which has been fruitful for them, and the women in the prison.

Parish Report for St. Innocent Orthodox Church, Macon GA

This past year things have picked up a bit at St. Innocent Orthodox Church. Despite having port-a-potties for bathrooms and no fellowship hall our Sunday attendance has held steady and even increased a bit. Attendance on a typical Sunday hovers around 55-65. In the past year, we have added 6 new adult members and around 24 children of various ages.

During this past year, we have added a few weekly services as well as Wednesday evening Bible Studies. The choir continues to be one of our best assets. The prison ministry has slowed down but still meets weekly at Central State Prison in Macon. Because of our lack of fellowship space, Church School took a break this past year. We continue to post sermons and classes on YouTube. Fr. Theophan continues to give church tours and be regularly invited to the local colleges to give presentations on Orthodox Christianity. This year we started to use parish management software called Realm which streamlines some of our administrative duties as it combines our financial software, email list, church directory and calendar in one simple app.

Our biggest accomplishment this past year has been the financing and building of our new fellowship hall. Our new facility is 4000 square feet and includes 3 classrooms, an office, our first real kitchen, men and women's bathrooms, and plenty of storage. The main gathering area

connects to the substantial patio which will be great when we get the BBQ going again. In June of 2017, we started our fundraising campaign and were blown away by the response of our generous people. In July we moved out of our doublewide trailer and in August the construction project began. There were a lot of weather delays but we were still able to have our midnight fellowship on Pascha in our new fellowship space. To top off the good news, at the end of the project we came in under budget!

Another important milestone for our community is that at this past Annual Meeting the parish voted to dedicate a quarter acre of land for our new cemetery. The land has been cleared and seeded. We are currently in the process of formalizing the bylaws, rules and regulations and easement documents with the hopes that we will be able to sell plots by the end of summer.

In the coming year as we settle into our new hall, our first goal is to restart our church school. There has also been some discussion about the possibility of building a playground. Alongside our effort to grow our community by building up our infrastructure, we are also looking outward and assessing areas where we could be charitable in our local area.

As we head into our 22nd year it is our hope that God would continue to grace us, guide us, send us spiritually hungry people and help us to do His work in the Middle Georgia region.

Parish Report for St. Symeon Orthodox Church – Birmingham, AL

St. Symeon Orthodox Church had a modestly positive year of growth. We had another record attendance for Pascha and Bright Monday.

Since last summer, there were 6 baby baptisms and two adults received. There are currently 3 catechumens and 5 inquirers. Two weddings were also celebrated.

Fr. Seraphim Joa moved to Birmingham last November and capably serves as a second priest at St. Symeon's and as a supply priest in the Deanery.

On April 28, 2018, we had a festival-type event in the church hall which we called a "Food and Culture Fair." It included four cross-cultural pastry and cultural item booths – Russian/Ukrainian, Balkan, N. European and Southern American, plus our church bookstore. Choir concerts, a lecture on Iconography by Protodeacon Ephraim Rivers, and church tours took place in the temple. Georgia Briggs, author of the book "Ikon," presented her work as well. We have four inquirers as a result of the event and a lot of good will expressed in the parish neighborhood. The day surpassed our financial expectations, as well. We have to find an alternative date, likely in the Fall, for future efforts.

Fr. Deacon Stephen Muse presented a retreat during Lent at St. Symeon's on the Shroud of Turin.

Our Seminarian, Reader Phillip Ritchey, completed his first year of school at St. Vladimir's. The parish supports him in the school's matching fund program. He is doing hospital chaplaincy work in Birmingham this summer for his required field work training.

Our church choir completed a Nativity double-CD recording in the Fall of 2017. The choir has recently been honored to be chosen to record an Akathist Service in English to St. John the Wonderworker of Shanghai and San Francisco, by Fr. Peter Perekrestov, of Joy of All Who Sorrow Cathedral in San Francisco. This will take place in late July, just prior to the All-American Council.

St. Symeon's will have a vendor booth at the Council. St. Symeon's music is available on CD's for purchase, as well as on the various internet music services (iTunes, Spotify, etc.) and on YouTube.

When a senior priest in the Georgian Orthodox Church heard our choir sing "Christ is risen" in Georgian on YouTube, he sent the parish a hand-painted Icon of St. Nina of Georgia, with an embedded relic of the Saint – a tremendous blessing for our community!

We are intent on paying off our building loan to the Diocese as soon as we possibly can.

Thanks be to God for all things!

St John the Wonderworker, Atlanta GA , July 2018

St John the Wonderworker Parish has 133 adult members with another 30 or so "irregulars". Attendance at Sunday services averages 100 adults and quite a number of babies and small children. There is an average of 15-20 at Saturday Vespers.

Since last July we baptized 9 newborns. At Pascha 11 adults and 2 children were received by Chrismation, with one adult and one child Baptized and Chrismated. We currently have 5 catechumens. This year we also had 3 weddings and one funeral.

This has been a very active year starting with a visit in August by Fr Moses Berry for our second annual Brotherhood of St Moses the Black event. Fr Moses brought his handmade quilts and other artifacts from his African American History museum in Ash Grove Missouri. The audience was enthralled by his tales of the Underground Railroad and the function of quilts hung out as sign posts for escaping slaves.

Our local chapter of The Brotherhood of St Moses has been growing and we recently participated in the annual "Juneteenth" parade, proudly carrying the icon of St Moses through the streets of Atlanta.

In August some of our young adults joined up with peers from other local parishes to put on "The Connect Conference", a symposium for Orthodox Young Adults which drew a number of "Millennials" from across the country to Atlanta. There were talks on subjects ranging from Giving and Stewardship, to Orthodoxy and the Arts.

Our parish subsequently received a grant of \$25,000 from the Lily Foundation through Telos an organization within the GOA with the purpose of researching and developing successful approaches to attracting and integrating young adults into Orthodox Parishes. We will use most of the money to fund an even bigger conference this year.

At Christmas time we, we had a "Posada", a Spanish custom where the children dressed in the usual Nativity play costumes, process around the neighborhood singing Christmas songs and stopping at designated houses along the way seeking a place for the holy Family to find rest. Finding no "Posada" the company arrives at church where they gather around the manger like little angels around the new born Christ.

We had decided to skip the annual Christmas candlelight tour of homes this year as we thought everyone has already seen us the last 2 years. We were actually approached by the neighborhood

association to please participate as we are considered the highlight of the tour. This year we added a performance by our choir.

Currently our youth group is preparing for a mission trip to Appalachia with the Orthodox Youth Mission Team. Six of our older teens and 2 of our adult youth leaders will be spending a week in Kentucky with young people from other Orthodox parishes, helping local people repair their badly damaged houses and in the evening praying together and sharing their experiences. We have been fortunate this year in having Fr Seth Earl as our intern and assistant priest. He has helped us upgrade all of our communication technology and social media outreach and engaged himself in the life of our parish in many helpful ways. He has been appointed the new full time priest at St Tikon's Mission in Chattanooga where we expect with the Lord's blessing he will accomplish great things.

We also said good-bye to Antony Davis our Summer intern who is on his way to Charleston to complete his internship before returning to St Vlads. He has been a great help especially in the Loaves and Fishes program and as the sports director of our boys camp.

And finally, we experienced the loss of our Dear brother, Fr Christopher Williamson, who passed away during bright week. Even in his retirement he volunteered daily working with the homeless and he was confessor to many parishioners. He is missed and we continue to pray for his everlasting repose. Thanks to everyone for your prayers and support.

In Christ,
Fr Thomas Alessandroni

ST. LUKE ORTHODOX MISSION REPORT 2018
Anniston, Alabama

Fr. Basil Henry, Priest

Glory to God! St. Luke Mission has had a blessed past year. We received 12 new members through Baptism and Chrismation. At the moment, we have one catechumen and one serious inquirer and we expect more to join them on the path to Orthodoxy before long. We also celebrated one wedding.

Once again we saw record attendance at our Lenten, Holy Week and Paschal services. We continued our new tradition of setting up a large outdoor tent complete with a chandelier and twinkle lights to add to the Paschal festivity. The egg hunt was a massive success to the delight of all the children involved. We are currently scheduling new game nights at the church and dinner nights at local restaurants. These are especially popular with our folks. A couple of weeks ago, we had our annual "Day at the Lake." (One of our families has a home with a dock and boat on beautiful Weis Lake in Leesburg, Alabama.) One of the highlights of the year is our parish picnic and day of swimming and boating on the water. We continue to have our regular schedule of services and I am developing a new Biblical class for the midweek.

I know our dearly beloved retired DOS treasurer, Milos, loves to read about my adventures each year as "Santa Claus" in these reports. This Christmas we went to the psych-

ward at a local Hospital to sing carols and hand out treats and good cheer to the residents. I wore my Santa Claus suit and made sure all knew how much they were loved by our All-Compassionate Lord and St. Nicholas himself. Then this year I did something I have long desired. I showed up unannounced at the local Walmart and burst through the doors with an explosion of Christmas cheer and proceeded to wander about the entire store greeting people and shocking them with great joy aisle after aisle. The kids (and even teenagers) especially loved it and many ran to me to hug me and get photos made with Santa. I wish you could know the look of someone's face when they look up and suddenly see an icon of St. Nicholas standing in front of them, wishing them the love and joy of the Advent of our Lord. I loved it so much that I then went to another local grocery store and did it all again! A sweet young African-American mother came up to me with her sick little baby who had an oxygen line running to his nose and asked if I would hold him while she took our picture. I did so and blessed the little fellow. It was a grace-filled moment.

In fact that would be a great way to characterize our year here. A series of "Grace-filled moments." If you are familiar with the stories written by James Herriot, the beloved British veterinarian, you may remember one that describes an elderly, bed-bound lady surrounded by her loving animal friends. On the wall, she had a plaque with the powerful words: "God is Near." Those are words that we love to live by here at St. Luke in Anniston, Alabama.

St. Gregory's Mission in Tuscaloosa, AL

The Mission property is listed for sale. Reader's Services are still offered by Lori Edwards on Sundays.

Holy Myrrhbearers Mission, Montgomery, AL

Holy Myrrhbearers Mission is closed as an OCA mission and has re-formulated as a ROCOR mission, since a resident ROCOR priest became available.

Sts. Constantine and Helen Orthodox Mission Helena-McRae, GA

Fr. Alexis Baldwin

Priest in Charge: Though not officially assigned, I have been given the blessing to serve the community of Sts. Constantine and Helen in McRae-Helena. I drove down late December of 2017 for an initial meeting with them. My first Divine Liturgy was served late January 2018. This resumed regular monthly services for them, as the last one had been in October 2018.

Services: Currently, I am driving down once a month to serve Divine Liturgy on Saturday morning. Usually, I drive down on Friday afternoon. I have offered Confession and met with parishioners often during that time. Beginning September 2018, it is possible that I will drive down there twice a month to serve Divine Liturgy every other Saturday.

The community meets several times a month on Wednesday nights for Choir practice. In the coming months, the community plans to have reader's Matins every Sunday morning.

Members: The community itself is small. There are officially ten adults and five children, included in this number is one catechumen and three recently baptized children. Additionally, there are half a dozen people in the surrounding area loosely associated with the Mission.

The Mission owns a double wide trailer which was converted into a 25 person chapel space on one side and a kitchen and fellowship hall on the other side. There are two additional rooms used for catechesis and education. It has two bathrooms. The Chapel is located on two acres. All of this is debt-free and owned free and clear.

The Mission also offers for use a parsonage/guest house which is a 1000 sq ft, two bedroom, two bathroom house that sits on two acres of land, only a 10 minute walk from the chapel.