

С РОЖДЕСТВОМ ХРИСТОВЫМ!

Father James, Father Martin, and the Parish Council extend to all members and friends of our parish greetings and best wishes on the feast of the Nativity of our Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ. May He richly bless you in this festive season and in the year to come!

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PARISH LIFE: OUR LOAN PAID OFF IN FULL!

The last few newsletters have recorded the extraordinary progress made from September 2008 in paying off our loan. We can now happily advise that the final payment was made on 31 December 2008. This means that the \$127,000 that we borrowed from Westpac in late 2003 - making our first repayment in early 2004 - has now been repaid in full, some 9 years early! This is an amazing achievement, and one of which we can all be proud. Added to this achievement is our success in establishing parish life and in furnishing and adorning our beautiful church. All of this has involved a great deal of work for our parishioners and friends. We have had a great deal of help, of course, especially from the Cabramatta parish and those who participated in and assisted with fundraising concerts. In view of the repayment in full of our loan, our forthcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be a good opportunity to review what has been achieved and begin to plan the future of church life here on the Central Coast.

PARISH LIFE: OUR 2008 SUMMER CAMP

In previous issues of the newsletter we announced a summer camp to be held at Lake Macquarie. On the weekend on December 20-22, 2008, just over 50 of us gathered at the Crusaders campsite at Balcolyn. Joining our parish families were friends from the Centennial Park, Croydon, and Kentlyn parishes. The camp was fantastic! We arrived

after lunch on the Saturday, and stayed on till Monday morning. All had a great time.



Some highlights: All the kids helping read at Matins on Saturday; quite a few of them sleeping under the stars both nights; reading the Prayers of Preparation for Holy Communion together before outdoor Liturgy on Sunday; the outdoor Divine Liturgy itself, served under the trees and open sky; almost everyone there receiving Holy Communion; rock-climbing and canoeing Sunday afternoon; a fish and prawn BBQ cooked up by the men on Sunday evening; a challenging trivia and talent contest Sunday night; and the kids all queuing up to help read at

evening and morning prayers! We will definitely have more camps, and are already planning them for July and December 2009. At this stage, Mangrove Mountain is a possible venue for the Winter 2009 camp. Further information will be provided in this newsletter ASAP.

For those interested, some photos from the camp can be viewed online at the following site: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/gosfordrussianchurch/>. The link will also be made available through the parish website.

CHURCH LIFE: THE NATIVITY EPISTLE OF METROPOLITAN HILARION, FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA

Most Reverend brother Archpastors, Reverend Fathers, beloved brothers, sisters and children in Christ!

I address with heartfelt greetings the fullness of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia for the first time. For the new and lofty ministry which has been placed upon me I am in need of God's great mercy which completes that which is wanting. I ask for your prayers that the Lord will strengthen me in this new and responsible obedience.

During these holy days I congratulate you with the great feast of the Nativity of Christ from the distant city of Sydney, the cathedral see of the Australian and New Zealand Diocese. It is my prayer that we may all partake of that sublime and inalienable peace, of which the angels sang on that holy night above the town of Bethlehem, when "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14).

With the Nativity of Christ there comes also a new year. Time races by, year after year, day after day. It is not revealed to us what will come to pass with us in the course of a year. We know that all that transpires is for the good of a person. If one were to know beforehand what fortune lies in store for him, he would be in danger of becoming inactive; on the other hand, to know what inescapable sufferings are approaching us would be too difficult and unbearable. It is probably for this reason that the Lord

conceals future events from us and teaches us in this way to have hope in His merciful Providence, faith and humility.

At the beginning of this past year Metropolitan Laurus, our Abba who was beloved by all, reposed in the Lord, while at the end of the year - our kind Great Lord and Father, His Holiness Patriarch Alexis of Moscow and All Russia. Both will go into history as unifiers who healed the church divisions within the Local Russian Church. We all know how easy it is to cause division, for which no special effort is needed; but to unite and help sinners to make peace demands patience, tremendous inner strength, a loving heart, magnanimity and immeasurable faith in God's mercy. Let us all honor their memory not only with ardent prayer, but also by actively following their example of service to God and to people.

With the repose of His Holiness, Patriarch Alexis, a Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church is being convened in Moscow to deal with "church needs which have arisen" (Canon 20, Council of Antioch). Delegates from the Russian Church Abroad will take part in the election of a new Patriarch for the first time. For this reason we appeal to our delegates to address the matter of this election reverently and responsibly, for it is Christ Himself, the Head of the Church, Who beckons each of us to participate in the work of the Council.

May we all beseech the Lord with heartfelt prayer that the forthcoming Church Council will proceed in accordance with His salvific will which wisely directs all things towards good. May the participants of the Council become a vibrant power, able to bring joy to the hearts of all the faithful of the Russian Orthodox Church with the election of a new Patriarch.

Once again I greet you all with the saving and joy-filled feast of the Birth in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, the New Year and the approaching feast of the Lord's Baptism. I hope that you will spend these holy days in a radiant, pious and joyous manner. May the heart of each one of us become a manger for the Divine Christ Child to illumine with His grace, so that in our eyes and in our life people will be able to see reflected the light of the Star of Bethlehem, a light of hope for all of humanity.

I believe that celebrating the feast in this manner will be the best way to witness Orthodoxy to those around us who are not yet members of the Holy Church. I hope that in this radiant manner we will likewise approach the work of the Local Council. Amen.

+Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America & New York,
First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia

Nativity of Christ, 2008/2009

Преосвященные собратья-архипастыри, всечестные отцы-сослужители, дорогие братья, сестры и дети мои во Христе! Примите мое первое рождественское приветствие, обращенное к Полноте Русской Зарубежной Церкви. Для нового и столь высокого служения мне необходима особая милость Божия, обновляющая мои скудные силы. Усердно прошу всех вас молиться о том, чтобы Господь укрепил меня в несении нового и ответственного послушания.

Приветствую всех вас из далекого Сиднея, кафедрального града Австралийско-Новозеландской епархии, с великим торжеством Рождества Христова и желаю всем глубокий и неотъемлемый мир, воспетый ангелами над градом Вифлеемским в ту святую ночь, когда «Слово стало плотью» (Иоан. 1, 14).

С праздником Рождества Христова приходит и новый год. Время бежит, год за годом, день за днем. Человеку не открыто, что может посетить его в течение года. Но это ко благу человека. Если-бы человек заранее знал о грядущем счастье, он мог бы предаться бездействию; с другой стороны и заранее знать о предстоящих неизбежных страданиях было бы слишком тяжело и невыносимо. Поэтому, наверное, Господь и скрывает от наших взоров будущие события и тем поучает нас надежде на Его благой Промысл, вере и смирению.

В начале минувшего года отошел ко Господу наш Авва, всеми любимым Высокопреосвященнейшим Митрополит Лавр, а в конце – благостный Великий Господин и Отец наш, Святейший Патриарх Московский и всея Руси Алексей. Оба войдут в историю как объединители, уврачевавшие разделения внутри Поместной Русской Православной Церкви. Как известно, разделять легко, для этого не нужны особые усилия, а объединять и примирять падших людей требует терпения, колоссальных внутренних сил, широкого сердца, великодушия и неограниченной веры в милость Божию. Возлюбленные, будем чтить их память не только всеусердной молитвой, но и активным следованием их примеру служения Богу и людям.

В связи с кончиной Святейшего Патриарха Алексия, «ради назревших церковных нужд» (Антиох. Соб. Пр. 20), в Москве созывается Поместный Собор Русской Православной Церкви. В избрании нового Святейшего Патриарха впервые примут участие делегаты от Русской Зарубежной Церкви. Поэтому, призываю делегатов к благоговейному и ответственному отношению к своему избранию, ведь Сам Христос, Глава Церкви, зовет каждого из вас к участию в этих соборных деяниях. Прошу всех обращаться ко Господу с горячей молитвой о том, чтобы на предстоящем Церковном Соборе совершилась Его спасительная воля, всегда премудро направляющая ко благу. Пусть участники Собора станут живой силой, способной внести радость об избрании нового «Великого Господина и Отца» в сердца всех чад Русской Православной Церкви.

Еще раз поздравляю всех со спасительным и радостным праздником Рождества во плоти Господа нашего Иисуса Христа, Новолетия и приближающегося Крещения Господня! Желаю всем вам светло и благочестно встретить и провести эти святые дни. Пусть сердце каждого из нас станет вертепом, в котором воссияет Богомладенец Христос, чтобы в нашей жизни люди видели свет Вифлеемской Звезды, это сияние надежды для всего человечества. Верю, что таковая встреча праздника станет наилучшей проповедью Православия среди окружающих нас людей, не приобщившихся еще к Святой Церкви. В таком светлом состоянии, надеюсь, мы и приступим к деяниям Поместного Собора. Аминь.

+ ИЛАРИОН,
Митрополит Восточно-Американский и Нью-Йоркский,
Первоиерарх Русской Зарубежной Церкви.

Рождество Христово 2008/2009 г.

PARISH LIFE: CHURCH CLEANUP ON SATURDAY JANUARY 3rd, & CHURCH CLEANING GENERALLY

Our usual pre-Christmas general clean-up day at church was held on Saturday January 3rd. Lots of people turned up to help with the cleaning, and the church afterwards looked more beautiful than ever! Olga Petroff kindly served a Lenten lunch - soup, shepherd's pie and salad - afterwards to all those working. On Sunday January 4th, following Liturgy, the church vestments were changed to green and a Christmas tree was placed in church, leaving everything lovely in preparation for our festive services.

On the topic of cleaning in general, the Parish Council is seeking to draw up a roster of people to assist with the regular cleaning tasks. Two or three people have taken turns in this over the past five years, and Parish Council feels that it would be fair to share this load a little. The regular tasks included removing wax from the candle stands, scraping wax from the floor and sweeping, dusting, cleaning the glass on the icons, and vacuuming. Ideally, this could be done after each Sunday service. A good arrangement would be for two families at a time to take responsibility for cleaning. This would mean that each family has a turn approximately once every three months. Regular worshippers at our church are asked to give thought to this, and to see Olga Petroff if they are willing to assist. A roster can then be drawn up.

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Parish Council met on Tuesday December 16th for what was an unusually brief meeting. Discussion focused on progress with our loan repayments, and also on the Summer Camp. The next meeting will be on Tuesday January 14th, at which time the Parish Council will review the draft Annual Report for 2008 and plan for our AGM on 15 February 2009.

The Auditing Committee is likely to start work soon reviewing the accounts for 2008, so that their report can be included in the Annual Report.

CHURCH LIFE: CHURCH COUNCIL IN MOSCOW IN LATE JANUARY

In his Nativity Epistle, Metropolitan Hilarion mentioned that a Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church is to take place in Moscow in late January 2009 to elect a new Patriarch. This will be the first time that bishops, clergy and laity from the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia have participated in the election of a Patriarch. The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church have asked that the following petition be added to the Litany after the Gospel at every Divine Liturgy until the Council convenes:

Look down, O all-good Master, upon the forthcoming Council of Thine archpastors, pastors and faithful children, that in well-pleasing fashion they may undertake to set our Church in good order; grant them the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of the fear of God, the spirit of piety and zeal for the glory of Thy holy name; and preserve them from all temptations, impediments and divisions, that in love and oneness of mind they may freely perform the election of the Primate of our Church: we beseech Thee, O most compassionate Lord: hearken and have mercy.

Призри, Всеблагий Владыко, на предстоящий Собор архипастырей, пастырей и верных чад Твоих, во еже благоугодно совершити им устройство Церкви нашея, и подати им духа премудрости и разума, духа страха Божия, духа благочестия и ревности о славе имене Твоего Святаго; огради же их от всяких искушений, соблазнов и разделений, да непреткновенно в любви и единомыслии совершат они избрание Первосвященителя Церкви нашея, молимся Тебе, Всещедрый Господи, услыши и помилуй.

It would also be appropriate for the faithful to add this prayer to their morning or evening prayers.

CHURCH LIFE: NEW BISHOPS FOR THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE RUSSIA

In December 2008, two new bishops were consecrated for our Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia. These are bishops George (Schaeffer) of Mayfield and Jerome (Shaw) of Manhattan, both vicar bishops of the Eastern American Diocese. Interestingly, neither are of Russian background, both of them being converts to Orthodoxy. This brings to four the number of new bishops for our church this year, with the Australian-born Bishop John (Berzins) having been consecrated for South America, and Bishop Theodosius for Seattle. May God grant these newly-consecrated hierarchs of His Holy Orthodox Church grace and strength in their archpastoral labours!

PARISH LIFE: OUR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ON FEBRUARY 15TH, 2009

In previous newsletters, it has been advised that our AGM will be on 15 February 2009, the feast of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple. In view of the recent repayment of our mortgage, this AGM will be the most important meeting that the parish has had since the Extraordinary Parish Meeting in late 2003 at which we voted to purchase our current church and parish centre. All parishioners are asked to make time for this meeting, to carefully consider the Annual Report and associated documents that will be circulated prior to the meeting, and to come to the meeting prepared to discuss the future of parish life.

PARISH LIFE: MEMBERSHIP FORMS TO BE POSTED OUT DURING JANUARY

Most parishioners will be aware that the Normal Parish By-Laws, the standard constitution for parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia, contains provisions for Orthodox Christians to become members of such parishes, with entitlement to vote at meetings and hold office in the parish. Membership is on a year-by-year basis, and applications for membership are made in writing. To assist existing and potential members, membership forms will be posted out during January 2009 to all regular worshippers at our church. All those eligible to do so are encouraged to become parish members. Potential members should note that the By-Laws require a 6-month period before entitlement to vote is gained. This means that although all members will be able to participate in the AGM, only those with membership of more than 6 months will be able to vote.

CHURCH LIFE: YOUTH ACTIVITIES

In recent years our Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia has begun to increasingly focus on youth work. Committees have been formed internationally and locally, and priests have recently been asked to nominate young people from each parish to participate in a conference during February 2009 to plan youth activities. Father James has nominated Sarah Carles, Anna Carles and Sebastian Reid. As planning progresses, it is expected that there will be opportunities for other young people to be involved. More information about Diocesan youth activities will be forthcoming in due course.

DIOCESAN LIFE: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH

As usual, there will be two annual, diocesan-wide collections in February-March. The first of these will be for "Orthodox Action - Melbourne", and will provide missionary literature and assistance to needy persons in Russia. This is a different collection to the one for "Orthodox Action - Sydney" usually taken up in December. In our parish, this collection will be taken up on Sunday February 1st. The second collection will be for the Holy Trinity Orthodox Seminary in Jordanville, New York, and will provide financial

assistance to students from our Diocese, covering tuition, room and board. In our parish, this collection will be taken up on Sunday March 1st. As with our collections late last year, special collection envelopes will be made available. These will be sent out during January with parish membership forms, and can be returned on the day of the collection.

PARISH LIFE: THE BLESSING OF HOMES AT THEOPHANY

As usual, Father James will bless parish homes during the feast of Theophany. This will be possible on the afternoon of the Eve of the Feast, Sunday January 18th, on the afternoon of the feast itself, Monday January 19th, and on the days afterwards. A list for those interested in having their home blessed will be available in church from January 7th, Christmas Day.

DIOCESAN LIFE: COLLECTION FOR THE GEELONG PARISH

The Geelong parish of "Our Lady, Joy of all Who Sorrow" is currently undergoing extensive renovations. When these renovations are finished, the church is to be frescoed throughout, somewhat like the Cabramatta church. This is an expensive undertaking, costing up to \$150,000. Those wishing to contribute can add their names to a special "Contribution List" ("Подписной Лист") at the candle desk in church. In view of the help that we have received from other parishes, all are encouraged to contribute to this worthy project.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

Newly-reposed: Patriarch Alexis

Special needs: Mark and family, George and family

The sick & suffering: Priest Simeon; our parishioner Victor (Manjetny); and also for Vasili, Vera, Eugenia, Olga, Leonid, Margaret, Galina, Tatiana, Nun Euphrosyne

Families with new babies: Reader Luke, Elise, and baby Daniel (born 17.12.2008)

Expectant mothers: Susannah, Kira

Departed: Metropolitan Vitaly, Metropolitan Laurus, and former parishioners and benefactors Irina (Kamenev), Nun Maria, George (Kraihin), Theodore & Antonina (Tialshinsky), Lyubov (Smieska), Victor (Pulkownik), Olga (Timohina), Alexander (Dikan), Elena (Yakupova)



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