

Saint Panteleimon Russian Orthodox Church, Gosford

ПАНТЕЛЕИМОНСКИЙ ЛИСТОК

PARISH NEWSLETTER

~ Number 87, 7 February 2010 ~

PARISH LIFE: AUGUST 2009 - DECEMBER 2009

It has been a long break since the publication of the July-August 2009 parish newsletter in mid-August, just after our parish feast-day. This is the longest period without a newsletter since July 2002, when our newsletter first began to be published. This is in part because a great deal has happened in parish life since then.

In late August, our long-time parishioner and Auditing Committee member Andrew Kfoury and his fiancée Cindy Butcher were married in the Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral at Strathfield, with Father James and Father Martin serving. Our warmest best wishes, if somewhat belatedly, to Andrew and Cindy!

After a busy month in August, September was very quiet. We had just our regular Sunday services, with Father James serving in Wallsend on the two major feast-days that month.

October was again busy, with our Long Weekend BBQ on Monday 5th. This was, as usual, a most enjoyable day, with a diverse crowd of parishioners and friends gathering for fellowship and fun. Matushka Marie afterwards put together an excellent photo-collage of the day, now on display in the church hall.

At Divine Liturgy on Sunday October 18th, Father James was joined by Archpriest Gabriel Makarov from Brisbane and Priest Alexander Filchakov of Newcastle, a large gathering of clergymen for our small church! Father Gabriel presided at the service, and also gave the sermon in Russian and English. Fathers Gabriel and Alexander were visiting for the wedding of Elisei (Eric) Yakimov and Kathrine Chernih, which was celebrated in our church that afternoon. Eric was an altar-server in our church in his teenage years. A great many relatives and friends of the young couple filled to church to overflowing. A choir from Sydney under the direction of Nicholas Rotenko sang beautifully at the wedding service, and a lovely reception was held afterwards at the Narara Community Centre. Congratulations, again belatedly, to Eric and Katya!

On Sunday October 25th, Father James baptised Maria, the infant daughter of Alexander Yatskanich and Natasha Serga of Terrigal. Masha's godparents were Evgenia Troshina and Igor Dikhtyaruk. Congratulations to Alexander and Natasha, and to Masha's big sister Sophia (baptised here in 2007), on the baptism of their baby girl!

November was also a quiet month, although we had services on three Sundays. The

last of these was an English-language Divine Liturgy on Sunday 29th, the feast of the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew, and the anniversary of Father James' ordination as deacon in 1998. Somewhat unusually for an English-language service, a great many people were present.

In December we had scheduled services on only one weekend, Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th. Our other Sunday service was at the Summer Camp, information concerning which can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

On the evening of Wednesday December 9th Father James participated in services at the Cathedral in Strathfield to mark the 25th anniversary of Metropolitan Hilarion's consecration to the episcopate. A number of parishioners attended Divine Liturgy the following morning. At a festive banquet held in Vladyka's honour on the evening of December 10th, Father James, Father Martin and Matushka Tanya, Sophia Kfoury and Anna Carles represented our parish.

On the evening of Tuesday December 15th we were fortunate to receive the myrrh-streaming icon of the Mother of God, "Softener of Hardened Hearts", in our church. Archpriest George Lapardin and the custodians of the icon arrived with it from Newcastle just before 7.30pm, and were met at the church doors by Father James, Father Martin, and nearly 60 parishioners and friends. A moleben and akathist to the Mother of God were then served, following which all the faithful venerated the icon, were anointed with the myrrh, and received a small copy of it as a keepsake. This was a truly beautiful and prayerful service.

The service on Sunday December 20th was extremely well attended, with a great many children and adults receiving Holy Communion, and the choir sang beautifully. And so it was that parish life in 2009 finished on a high note.

At the end of December, Father James travelled to Melbourne to participate in the annual Diocesan Youth Conference and the concurrent Pastoral Conference. Amongst the youth participating in the conference were Sarah and Anna Carles from our parish. The 2010 youth conference is to be held in NSW, and there has been some suggestion that the Central Coast might be a suitable location!

Almost astonishingly, 2009 was our fifth full year here at West Gosford. It was yet another positive one in the life of our small parish. We began the year free of debt, and have managed to save this year over \$10,000 in what the Parish Council has designated our "Future Fund". We have had two successful parish camps, acquired a number of new icons and framed them and others, purchased books necessary for the Divine Services, conducted a Bible Study, and have welcomed many new faces into our community. Services have been well-attended. Glory to God for all things! We pray that He will continue to bless us in 2010, and beyond.

Much has already happened in 2010. For the sake of brevity, however, January 2010

news will be featured in the next issue of the Newsletter.

PARISH LIFE: BIBLE STUDY

In the last issue of the Newsletter it was mentioned that a Bible Study had commenced in July, the study being led by Ian Michie, a parishioner of the All Saints of Russia church in Croydon, PhD student in Ancient History, and a teacher with postgraduate qualifications in Orthodox theology. The study group was a small one, with twelve people involved, and trialled a course that Ian had put together for use in parishes of our Diocese. The group met 17 times between July and December, mostly on Thursday nights. For the most part each session involved reading through and discussing a chapter of the Gospel of Saint Mark, although there were two sessions at which DVDs were shown. At the final session on December 17th, the group met at the Oriental Cafe in West Gosford, enjoying lively discussion, good company, and delicious Lenten food. Those participating found the study most interesting and informative, and all were grateful to Ian for preparing the study and travelling to Gosford to conduct it. This year, consideration will be given to the possibility of other studies, both evening studies and one-day "intensive" studies. Those with an interest in participating in such educational activities should let Father James know, as this will help him assess their viability.

PARISH LIFE: AN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MENAION PURCHASED

In the 2008 Annual Report, mention was made of plans to purchase four complete sets in English of the Menaion, a set of twelve liturgical books essential for the Divine Services. The English-language Menaion was the only important liturgical book that we did not have. This was because each book cost approximately \$100.00, in addition to the cost of shipping them to Australia from the United States.

The term "Menaion" (which in Slavonic is 'Минея', or 'Minéya') means "of the month". Each volume contains the services for each day for an entire month. The Menaion is the largest collection of liturgical texts used in the Orthodox Church, and is therefore amongst the most important of the liturgical books owned by a parish. Outside of the Sundays of Great Lent, Holy Week, Bright Week, and the Sundays of the Pentecostarion, texts from the Menaion are used in every one of the Divine Services.

Up until now we have made use of an incomplete photocopied edition, supplemented when necessary by a borrowed loose-leaf edition. From 2004-2007, four copies of the relevant part of the Menaion were made before each service. In 2008-2009, the relevant parts for each year were identified at the beginning of the year, photocopied, and compiled in four spiral-bound volumes. Either way, this was a time-consuming process that involved a great deal of planning by Father James.

Late in 2009 we found ourselves in a financial position to purchase these books. Four sets, each of twelve volumes, were purchased, a total of 48 books. The cost was a little over \$5000.00, the purchase made easier by a strong exchange rate at the time and a generous discount from the publisher. The books arrived late in 2009, and have been used during the services since.

Although significant, the cost of purchasing the Menaion was a one-off cost. Now that it has been purchased, it will last for as long as the books last. Even with frequent use, liturgical books tend to be in service for at least 25 years.

It has already been found that working with the liturgical books in their actual form better develops the liturgical skills and knowledge of those reading and singing in the services.

This was an important purchase of which the parish can be proud. It shows a confidence in the future of the parish, and an ongoing commitment to the use of English in the services, something that will become increasingly important as the years go by.

PARISH LIFE: 2010 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Once again, our parish is due to have an Annual General Meeting (AGM). An AGM is convened each year in order for parish members to hear the Parish Council and Auditing Committee report on the year just completed, and to elect a Parish Council to serve in the year ahead. This year, our AGM is likely to be held late in April, on Sunday 18th, Great Lent and Pascha making an earlier date impractical. The Parish Council will make a decision shortly concerning the timing of the AGM. By way of preparation, parish members and friends are asked to keep Sunday April 18th free, and to renew their parish membership. An article elsewhere in this Newsletter explains parish membership.

In discussions concerning the AGM, Olga Petroff has reminded the Parish Council that she although she remains willing to help, she would like to retire as Head Sister. Any of our parish ladies interested in taking on this role should talk to Father James, or to Olga.

PARISH LIFE: CHURCH CLEANING

For a number of years, regular church cleaning has been done by two or three hard-working volunteers, with occasional assistance on a Sunday from those present and willing to help. This has become increasingly hard to sustain, and so it is that the Parish Council has decided to put together a cleaning roster, whereby parishioners and friends take responsibility for cleaning on a fortnightly basis.

The idea is a simple one, and one that has worked effectively in other parishes of our Diocese. A group of three or four adults, plus children, is rostered to clean the

church after each service. Each group forms itself; two small families might decide to work together, or one large family, or a group of friends. The more groups that there are, the better, as it reduces the number of times that each group is required to clean. With approximately 24 Sunday services remaining this year, it would be good to have around 12 groups, with each one cleaning twice.

Cleaning the church is fairly straightforward. The glass on the icons is wiped clean, and any old flowers removed. The oil lamps are filled and trimmed. Candle stands are wiped free of wax, and fresh oil is applied to ensure that cleaning the stands remains easy. Wax is scraped from the floor. Bins are emptied, the carpets are shaken and vacuumed, and the floor swept.

Ideally, cleaning would be done after each service. If this is not convenient, other arrangements can perhaps be made. Major clean-ups will still be undertaken 2-3 times a year: before Christmas, Pascha, and our parish feast-day.

Those willing to assist with church cleaning should talk to our head sister, Olga Petroff, (4342-4241) as soon as possible. It would be good to have a schedule drawn up by the beginning of March.

PARISH LIFE: OUR 2009 SUMMER CAMP, AND 2010 PLANS

Our 2009 summer camp took place at Crosslands Convention Centre, Galston Gorge, over the weekend of December 12-13. The camp, dedicated to the Holy Apostle Andrew the First-Called, began on Friday night and finished on Sunday afternoon. Highlights included the low ropes activity on Saturday morning; swimming and canoeing on Saturday afternoon; a fish BBQ on Saturday evening; with games in the

dark and singing afterwards; services Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning; and a play based on the life of Saint Andrew. Although smaller than the winter camp, it was nevertheless a great success. Matushka Marie has since put together a photo-collage of the camp, also on display in the church hall.



Unfortunately, Crosslands will not be available for our winter camp this year, the kitchen and dining area undergoing major renovations during June and July. Moreover, the site is also still a little big for our summer camps at this stage, the summer camps being less well-attended in view of end-of-school and other activities at that time. We nevertheless plan to have a winter and summer camp this year, and the search for another location is underway. Read this Newsletter for more information.

PARISH LIFE: PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Our Parish Council met regularly during 2009, carefully reviewing parish finances and activities. After a summer break during January 2010, the Parish Council is due to meet for the first time in 2010 on February 9th. At this meeting, the Parish Council

will consider reports on the financial position of the parish as at December 31st, 2009, and will give thought to parish life in the year ahead. The financial reports to be considered by the Parish Council will, in time, be included in the Annual Report to be presented to our AGM in April 2010.

PARISH MEMBERSHIP

The rules governing parish membership are set out in the Normal Parish By-Laws ("the By-Laws") of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia (ROCOR). A person may become a member of a ROCOR parish if they are an Orthodox Christian, have reached the age of 18 years, pay the established membership dues, make their confession and take Holy Communion not less than once a year, and tend to the moral and economic welfare of the parish.

In our parish, the annual membership fee is \$20.00. Membership is granted for a calendar year; that is, from January to December. New members gain the right to vote only after 6 months of membership. Those new members who transfer membership from another ROCOR parish may vote immediately.

Parish members are now asked to renew their parish membership, and regular worshippers are invited to consider becoming members. This is particularly important in view of the fact that our AGM will be held in April 2010.

Paragraph 12 of the By-Laws requires any person wishing to become a member of a parish to make a written application to the Parish Council. To make this easier for everyone, our parish has developed an 'Application for Parish Membership' form. A copy of this form is enclosed with this Newsletter.

Photocopies of this form can be made, or copies downloaded from our website. Some forms are also available at church. Please ask at the candle desk!

Parish members are asked to complete the 'Application for Parish Membership' form upon annual renewal of membership. This helps ensure that parish records are up-to-date and that personal details remain correct.

Completed membership forms should be given to our Parish Council secretary, Katya Marcotrigiano, or to any Parish Council member.

PARISH LIFE: SCHEDULES OF SERVICES

The Summer 2009-2010 Schedule of Services, covering services from December to February, is now almost at an end. There are quite a few services still scheduled for February. Apart from our regular Sunday services, we will have Great Compline at 7.00pm on the first four evenings of Great Lent, and Vespers each Sunday evening. These services are very beautiful and soul-profiting, and all who can are encouraged to attend.

Parishioners and friends of the parish can expect the Autumn 2010 Schedule of

Service to be available in church and on the website by February 21. It will include the services for Holy Week, Pascha and Ascension. Pascha this year falls on April 4, and, God willing, we will have a midnight service here in Gosford.

CHURCH LIFE: CHARITABLE COLLECTIONS

Every year in our Diocese, there are a number of collections taken up to assist various charitable causes. In February there are collections to assist Orthodox Action - Melbourne and the Holy Trinity Seminary in Jordanville, New York; on Palm Sunday there is a collection for the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in the Holy Land; in November there is a collection for the Synod of Bishops' Charitable Fund, now known as the 'Fund for Assistance'; and in December there is a collection for Orthodox Action - Sydney. The two Orthodox Action groups both assist the needy in Russia in various ways. There are also occasional appeals, such as the appeal in 2009 and 2010 to assist the Saint Vladimir Memorial Church in New Jersey.

In addition to these Diocesan appeals, our parish undertakes special charitable collections during the three major fasting periods: Great Lent, the Apostles' Fast, and the Nativity Fast. This helps us link prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We also have occasional special appeals for various causes, such as projects with the life of the Diocese.

In 2009, we collected nearly \$2000.00 for the Diocesan collections, and just over \$1000.00 for our parish collections. Full details of each collection will be set out in our Annual Report.

The two "February" collections will take place in our parish on February 21st and March 7th respectively. Collection envelopes will be available in church from February 7th.

With Great Lent beginning, we will have our usual "money box" collection. This year, we will collect for the ROCOR Mission in Haiti, assisting those suffering from the devastating earthquake there in January. For those wishing to learn more about the work of the ROCOR Fund for Assistance in Haiti, there is much information of the ROCOR website: www.russianorthodoxchurch.ws. Money boxes should be available by the beginning of Great Lent. Please give generously!

PARISH LIFE: THINGS TO HELP WITH

People often ask if there is something that they can assist with in parish life. As our parish has grown considerably over the last few years, there is certainly a great deal more to be done than before, and any assistance is always welcome. The need for help with church cleaning has already been mentioned. There are also a number of other tasks with which people may wish to assist.

One is the preparation of this Newsletter. Father James has usually prepared it,

but as the length of time since the last Newsletter appeared suggests, this is increasingly difficult. Ideally, the Newsletter appears monthly, and reports on events and activities in our parish and the broader church. Each Newsletter takes approximately 5 hours to prepare, including making arrangements for printing. It is distributed in church and by post to any parishioners or friends not in church on the day of distribution.

Another project is that of managing the parish bookstore. The responsibility of Reader Christopher Dowling before his move to Canberra, the bookstore has suffered by not having someone focus on ensuring that stock is regularly replenished with new English and Russian titles, and with icons and other devotional items. This would be a good job for one or two people who love spiritual books, and with at least a basic grasp of Russian. The bookstore co-ordinator(s) would need to be present at most Sunday services so as to ensure that purchases could be made.

A further project is that of the parish website. Designed and maintained by Olga and Dmitri Lusim of Lussoft Systems, it has been Father James' responsibility to provide new material and updates. As anyone who has visited the site will know, updates are few and far between, and are generally limited to service schedules and Newsletters. If someone could take responsibility for providing regular updates and photographs for the website, and for reviewing the existing content, this would be a great help!

These are just a few of the things with which people could help. Others include ironing and changing the vestments in church; selling candles and prosphora at morning services; assisting in the kitchen; and singing and reading in the choir. If anyone is interested in any of these tasks, please see Father James.

THE PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL ARE ASKED FOR:

The sick: Subdeacon Vitaly (Lupish); our parishioners Victor (Manjetny), Natalia, Irene, Tatiana, Nina, John and George (Fomin). Also for Elena, Olga, Margaret, Nun Euphrosyne, Nikita, and Christopher.

Expectant mothers: Lydia, Elena and Catherine

Departed: Patriarch Alexis, Metropolitan Vitaly, Metropolitan Laurus, newly-reposed Valdimir (Dmitrieff), and former parishioners and benefactors Irina (Kamenev), Nun Maria, George (Kraihin), Theodore & Antonina (Tialshinsky), Lyubov (Smieska), Victor (Pulkownik), Olga (Timohina), Alexander (Dikan), Elena (Yakupova), Lydia (Ustimko)



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