



Deanery of Ontario

Archdiocese of Canada - Orthodox Church in America

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ONTARIO DEANERY REPORT Archdiocesan Assembly – August 2013

ONTARIO HIGHLIGHTS

1. Major growth in Russian population in Toronto increases mission needs
2. Improved cross-jurisdictional work on education & social works
3. Increased number of smaller parishes increase need for part-time clergy
4. Long-term financial planning for building repair/renovation pays off
5. Deaneries & Diocese must plan to address renovations for physical building needs for new missions

The Deanery of Ontario has almost doubled in size in the last three years. This is due to a number of factors, including the addition of the Ottawa Cathedral to the Deanery of Ontario, the participation of the Russian MP representation parish and the Georgian mission in Toronto, the assignment of a regular priest-in-charge to St. Gregory's (Kingston) and St. Nicholas' (Richmond Hill), and the affiliation with the Deanery of a returned Canadian priest who had been serving in Europe.

The Deanery continues to work alongside the Eastern Orthodox Clergy Fellowship (EOCF) of Toronto, and the Hamilton Pan-Orthodox Association, on a variety of activities, including the annual Hamilton Orthodox Vacation Church School, and a number of initiatives aimed at securing protections for families whose faith is denigrated in Ontario schools under the provinces new sexuality regulation.

The status of the parishes of the Deanery is positive and growing (both spiritually and numerically), and can be summarized as follows:

All Saints of North America Church (Hamilton) - *Father Geoffrey Korz, Dean of Ontario* Our parish in Hamilton has been blessed to enjoy spiritual and numerical growth, as well as continuing the beautification of its temple with hand-written iconography and preliminary work on its narthex and cupola. The parish Desert Wisdom bookstore continues to provide extensive spiritual materials for local Orthodox faithful, and the annual spiritual education and fundraising events have proven edifying for parish members and the wider Orthodox community. A number of catechumens and newly illumined have been received at the

parish over the last three years. The parish is active in the Sunday of Orthodoxy and Vacation Church School programs of the local Pan-Orthodox Association, and has taken a number of initiatives to present to and work with the local school board and the Ontario Legislature on issues of protecting religious freedom in schools, including a delegation to the Social Policy Committee of the Ontario Legislature regarding Bill 13, the pseudonymous “Accepting Schools Act”. Regular educational Orthodox Coffee Talks continue.

Annunciation Cathedral (Ottawa) - *Father James Griggs, Dean of the Cathedral*

The cathedral parish has been at the current location for seven years. The community in Ottawa has one hundred and ten (110) voting members. More funds have now been found for maintenance, due in part to a local boxing club that pays about four thousand dollars (\$4000) a month for use of the basement. The boxers’ presence seems to have reduced the number of unwanted visits from neighbourhood ‘characters’. An Ethiopian community also has a chapel set up for worship. Both child and adult baptisms have been regular. Much progress has been made in the completion of the cathedral’s Iconostasis.

Christ the Saviour Orthodox Cathedral has experienced remarkable growth under its new Rector, Father Vasile Kolega. The significant renovations undertaken by the previous rector, Father Oleg Kirilov, have now been concluded, and a number of new classrooms for Church and Russian school programs have subsequently been added. On average, at least one baptism occurs each week, largely among the parish’s core population of new immigrants from Russia. Since most of these families are living in isolation from their families who remain in Russia, the parish has become a social hub for them. The nave is now equipped with a camera system which broadcasts baptisms and other services online via Skype, which can be viewed by relatives abroad. The parish has also updated its adjoining building, providing a well-appointed apartment for visiting clergy families. The parish kiosk continues to grow.

Major renovations and repairs have been underway over the last five years. Efforts are being made to create a welcoming atmosphere at the cathedral, including new classrooms and upgraded meeting rooms, and more people are taking an active part in the life of the parish. An effort to expand the church school is ongoing. Most notably, concrete plans are underway to establish English language services under the umbrella of the cathedral.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa Orthodox Church (Kingston) was served from January to February 2012 by *Father Alexei Vassiouchkine* and *Father Andrew Anderson* of Montreal, in turn. From March through May 2012, Father Andrew has been serving each weekend, commuting from Montreal to Kingston on a weekly basis for Sunday liturgy. The parish has seen a number of baptisms and chrismations. Annually in May, the parish holds its annual main fundraiser, “Slavic Night” - a dinner with musicians and performers and a silent auction. The community continues to be close-knit and cooperative; the parish has by necessity developed this initiative among the laity over the last few years while its various priests in charge have commuted from a distance to serve the parish.

Saint Seraphim of Sarov Church (North Toronto) - *Father Aleksey Vassiouchkine*

Our suburban Toronto parish experienced a division during the first months of 2012, when its former rector Igumen Nestor led the parish into schism with an unknown jurisdiction. A portion of the parish membership followed the rector into this schism, while the majority of the faithful (including the lay organizers of the parish) remained under our bishop. Father Alexei Vassiouchkine was subsequently appointed priest-in-charge of this mission parish, and has been meeting for a number of weeks in space rented from an Anglican community. The parish initially

had some problems finding a location for services, and has finally come to an arrangement with an Anglican parish in Richmond Hill. Since the split in the parish occurred in early 2012, most of the choir members and educated individuals chose to remain with a canonical body, and form the backbone of the new community. The mission celebrated its summertime feast day with His Grace in attendance, as well as its New Year's Festival, attended by local councillors and the local Member of Parliament, an Orthodox Christian, the Dean, and up to 200 faithful.

Saint John the Divine Orthodox Church (Windsor) - *Father Constantine Katsilas*

The Windsor parish participated in Windsor's Pan Orthodox services, including partnering with the nearby Romanian parish for an All Souls Saturday. Renovations on the lower hall, washrooms, and exterior yard have been completed. The newly restored parish served a full set of Holy Week services, and has been averaging about two dozen people each week (the parish had previously been closed just four years ago).

By the fall of 2012, regular attendance has risen at Saint John the Divine slightly since the spring, and one baptism has taken place. There is an ongoing effort to coordinate activities with other parishes in Windsor. Due to an identified need, prayers in preparation for Holy Communion have been printed and made available to the faithful. A volunteer very kindly painted the back wall of the church royal blue, which is a great improvement over the old colour.

Saint Tikhon Representation Parish (MP - Toronto) - *Father Sergey Rasskazovsky*

Saint Tikhon's Podvorie has been at their current location (previously an Old Calendarist church) for about two years. The parish boasts a working sisterhood, a parish school, and regular events for both children and adults, religious films being a regular feature. The parking situation is much improved at the present location. The parish is facing a challenge ministering to the needs of divorced mothers from among the Russian emigree community, and is interested in collaborating with other parishes to find means to address this pastoral need.

Iveron Icon of the Mother of God Georgian Mission (Toronto) - *Father Paul Zakaraia*

This is the youngest Orthodox Christian parish in Canada. It strives to serve a community of about 3000 persons in the GTA. The Georgian community has encountered numerous challenges in its efforts to establish another parish in Calgary, Alberta, along with difficulties finding a priest to serve there. The current priest-in-charge makes particular effort to visit households and stopping young people on the street to encourage them to attend church services. The mission is currently housed in rented space, and is eager to find available land on which to build, since although lacking financial resources it boasts a large number of trained tradesmen as members capable of constructing a church building for the cost of materials alone.

Ontario Deanery clergy have also been blessed to work alongside the Eastern Orthodox Clergy Fellowship (EOCF) of Toronto, Canada's most active Orthodox clergy fellowship, who continue to provide various supports to campus ministry, special missions (such as prison ministry), and sharing events and activities of mutual spiritual benefit, such as serving together, venerating a number of visiting icons, and a variety of spiritual retreats and speakers offered in Toronto, Hamilton, and Kitchener-Waterloo.

