

Saint Olympia Orthodox Mission, Potsdam NY

Diocesan Report for 2017

We have been blessed: 2017 was a good year of growth for our parish. First and foremost, we were able to greatly increase the number of regular worship services at our Mission. As of August 2016, we still had Sunday Liturgies only twice each month; now, we have Saturday Vespers as well as Sunday Liturgies every week. We hope to add a Saturday evening Orthodox study program following Vespers during the coming year. We have been able to celebrate some weekday festal services (Theophany, Presentation, Life-giving Fountain, Dormition). Our attendance numbers for Sunday Liturgies average between 10 and 12 people.

Thanks to Fr. Luke's enthusiasm, we had our fullest Holy Week schedule to date (twelve services from Palm Sunday through Agape Vespers). For the Paschal Liturgy, we had 19 people and for the Agape Vespers we had 28. We also had a phenomenal parish feast to celebrate Pascha following the Vespers.

More important than numbers, we now have two enthusiastic college students who attend services regularly. There are other college students who attend as well, but these two are exceptional with one serving as a camp counselor at Antiochian Village last summer and the other becoming an integral part of our choir. Both just began their sophomore year, and both have a great love for the church and feel at home in our church community. We now have a subdeacon among our parishioners, and we were able to remodel a old set of vestments for him.

We are most grateful to Vladyka Michael for travelling to Potsdam to celebrate a Presanctified Liturgy here during Great Lent, and for visiting us here again and celebrating both Saturday Great Vespers and Sunday Divine Liturgy on September 9 and 10. This year, he arranged for Matushka Natalie Stavrevsky to give a presentation on Alzheimer's at SUNY-Potsdam. We are also grateful for his continued guidance in communicating with us via telephone and email. Even though we are physically distant from the diocesan headquarters, we feel connected and loved. Because of his encouragement and support, members of the Parish Council have been able to attend and give presentations on the growth of our mission at the Upstate New York Deanery meeting on March 23 and at the Diocesan Benefactors Dinner on April 23, both in Syracuse, NY, and we plan to attend and present at the Diocesan Council on November 2. We were able to send a representative to the five-day Mission School in Syosset, NY.

Our small chapel has become even more special to us. During Lent, we received the eagerly-awaited icon of our patron saint, St. Olympia the Deaconess, written through the hand of Mother Sophronia (Hofstead) and commissioned by a member of our parish (we

had been using a paper icon printed off the internet). We have received other gifts from anonymous donors such as crosses to adorn the top of iconostasis and some Lenten altar server vestments. We also modified the altar table by adding a lip to the back to prevent any accidents of things getting pushed off the rear (it is a very small space). Mother Sophronia also gifted a number of other icons to us—our little chapel has been truly blessed through her generosity. She is no longer with our parish (a great loss to us!) but is at Holy Myrrhbearers Monastery in Otego. When she moved from Potsdam, her donation of beautiful furniture and other household items formed the core “stock” for our Mission’s yard sale held in August—planned to coincide with the college students’ move-in days for the academic year. We raised over \$800 for our building fund through this yard sale. Perhaps just as important, we held this sale in the yard outside of our chapel which enabled us to show off our chapel to interested neighbors and yard sale shoppers, and to introduce many others to our “church” community.

Our pledged stewardship for 2017 is \$11,600.00. Our building account is at \$26,604.00 and our stewardship account is at \$3,577.00. When the building fund reaches an amount that is comfortable for our community, we will reopen our search for a more permanent space that is zoned for worship.

While we cannot advertise our location because the zoning of the chapel is residential, we do have a website, a Facebook page and a weekly e-bulletin with an updated format that goes out to over 100 people. We recently added a PayPal button to our website, to make it easier for people to donate using credit cards. Our library continues to grow.

We have worked to increase outreach in the community and beyond. In January, we gave a significant donation of blankets and bedding to our local Center of Religious Concern store (this is similar to Good Will in bigger cities but aids those in need either through poverty or disaster and gives clothing, and household goods vouchers to local churches as a way of extending help to the community). Our parish will participate with other local churches in a Thanksgiving dinner basket program. Most recently, we collected \$540.00 for the IOCC hurricane fund.

On behalf of St. Olympia Orthodox Mission and its Parish Council, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Diocesan Council for the grant that has encouraged and enabled our growth.

In Christ,

Jessica Suchy-Pilalis