

# JACOB'S WELL

## REPORT FOR DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY 2020

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This past year has been an unusual one for Jacob's Well. We produced our first digital-only issue in the Spring of 2020 due to the closing of our parishes caused by the Coronavirus. This proved to be advantageous as it spurred many readers in our Diocese to engage with the publication in a digital format for the first time and led the team at Jacob's Well to promote our digital platform more heavily. As a result, we had over 5,000 unique readers of Jacob's Well in its digital format, up from about 2,000 digital readers of previous issues. Many of these new readers were outside of our Diocese.

Over the past two years, Jacob's Well has produced three standard issues (Tribal, Trust, and Hierarchy and Equality) and one special issue on "Black Voices", which was a compilation of interviews of Black parishioners in our Diocese. The magazine has strived to offer a wide array of content – some simple and basic, some more complex or theoretical. Some topics were familiar and others less so, or from perspectives new to most readers. We have aimed to offer content for a wide variety of readers too: children, youth, families, non-Orthodox, etc. Our goal is to offer something edifying and challenging to every person in our Diocese.

Additionally, we have had a steady increase in readership from those outside of our Diocese over the past two years, as well as those beyond the OCA. This is in part because it is the only publication of its kind in the English-speaking Orthodox world.

There have been multiple requests by clergy outside our Diocese for printed copies of the magazine to distribute to their congregants. There is a need well beyond our Diocese for the ministry that Jacob's Well provides. We can meet part of that need digitally, but one of the great strengths of Jacob's Well is that in a world where almost everything is digital, a beautifully designed magazine made of quality material is a delight to hold in your hands and experience. It is that tactile experience which helps communicate the content of the magazine. However, print copies are expensive. To that end, the team at Jacob's Well is currently exploring grant opportunities to help make this ministry of our Diocese accessible to other parishes in the OCA and beyond.

I would also like to thank the entire team at Jacob's Well for their hard work and commitment: Nick Tabor, our Executive Editor, works extensively with our writers to edit and improve the content of their pieces. Nick, who normally resides in New York

City, is currently living in Mobile, Alabama, writing for a recent book deal he secured. Tagor Vajovnic, our Art Director, handles layout, secures contributions from artists, and designs his own artwork for each issue. Deacon David Maliniak copy edits all our articles. When done well, his work is not noticed. He allows the content to speak without the distractions of typos or poor grammar. I would like to welcome our newest team member, Assistant Editor Katie Sorenson. Lastly, I thank the writers and artists who have made original contributions to the magazine. They all put in hours of work. Writing and creating artwork is not an easy process, and all of us are indebted to those who volunteered their time and talent to provide quality content.

Much work goes into producing Jacob's Well. It is a long and demanding process that can only be done with a dedicated team, much like Christ and his disciples. Even the spreading of the Gospel was not the work of one man.

We are still in need of someone to manage our digital publications. Father Volodymyr Zablotzky had to leave the team to take on the duties of Acting Communications Director of the Diocese. If you can recommend someone, please contact Father Matthew Brown.

Even if you are not part of the Jacob's Well team, you can still help make this ministry a success. Make sure that hard copies of the magazine do not go to waste in your parish. Don't simply set them out for people to take, but hand them out as people venerate the cross and mail them to your homebound parishioners. Share the magazine with family and friends. When you're done reading your copy, give it away. Point out articles that you think would be of interest to a co-worker, friend, or neighbor. Subscribe to the digital magazine, so you receive it directly in your email in-box. Make sure to follow and like the magazine's Facebook page or Twitter account. And remember to share posted content.

You can also support this ministry by giving us positive and constructive feedback. Let us know if an article was particularly impactful to you or someone else you know. Let us know what you'd like to read more of, or if there is a topic that we have not addressed that would interest and edify you.

Thank you to all members of this Diocese for financially supporting this ministry. I hope it demonstrates how this Diocese is working hard to support our parishes. One of those ways is providing you with a tool for spreading the Gospel, something that can be shared with visitors and inquirers, and that can spark edifying coffee-hour conversations.

Rev. Matthew Brown, Editor-in-Chief