Official Announcements
Assignments and Changes

The Deacon Timothy Wilkinson, who was released to the Diocese of the West by Archbishop Job of the Diocese of the Midwest on May 16, 2007, is received into the Diocese of the West and attached to the altar of St. Nicholas of South Canaan Church, Billings, Montana, effective immediately.

The Archimandrite Gabriel (Cooke) is released as rector of SS. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, Phoenix, AZ and is attached to St. Paul Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV.

The Priest Peter Tobias is released as Priest-in-Charge of the Helena Orthodox Mission, Helena, Montana but remains rector of the St. Anthony the Great Mission of Bozeman, MT. At the same time, the Archpriest Matthew Tate is appointed Temporary Administrator of the Helena Mission.

As of 1 December 2006, the Annunciation Mission of Santa Maria, California is to be known as the Annunciation Church.

As of 1 December 2006, the Priest Athanasius Shaw, who is Acting Rector of the Holy Ascension Mission, Olympia, Washington, is appointed Rector.

The Monastery of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco is now relocated to 21770 Ponderosa Way, Manton, California. The mailing address for the monastery is: PO Box 439, Manton, CA 96059. The phone number is: (530) 474-5964. The monastic community remains responsible for servicing the St. Sergius Chapel at Point Reyes, CA and for the maintenance of the St. Eugene Hermitage, Point Reyes, CA.

As of 1 December 2006, the Priest John Strickland, who is Acting Rector of the St. Catherine Mission, Kirkland, Washington, is appointed Rector.

As of 1 December 2006, the Priest Christopher Swanson, who is Acting Rector of the St. Elizabeth Mission, Poulsbo, Washington, is appointed Rector.

As of 1 December 2006, the Archpriest Gregory Szyrynski, who is Acting Rector of the Holy Myrrhbearing Women Church, W. Sacramento, California, is appointed Rector.

Effective 5 December 2006, Archpriest Matthew Tate, who is Acting Dean of the Missionary Deanery, is appointed Dean.

As of 1 December 2006, the St. John the Evangelist Mission of Tempe, AZ is reactivated. At the same time, the Priest Damian Kuolt is released from his attachment to SS. Peter and Paul Church, Phoenix, AZ and assigned as Acting Rector of the St. John the Evangelist Mission. The physical address of the mission is: 351 E. Encanto Dr., Tempe, AZ 85281. The mailing address of the mission is: PO Box 27447, Tempe, AZ 85285-7447. The phone number is: (602) 418-2982.

Reposed Clergy

Archpriest Boris Symeonoff, the Pastor Emeritus of the San Anselmo parish, reposed on 4 January, 2007.

Deacon Joseph Kerns of our Tacoma, WA parish was killed in a terrible car accident the day after Thanksgiving, November 24, 2006.
Interview with His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN

Congratulations!
Whenever there is a series of photos of bishops, yours stands out because you are smiling. So let’s ask you the same question we might ask the Mona Lisa—what’s the secret of this smile? What is the source of this obvious joy?

The West has been my home for many years. I was born here and received into the Church here. I am just very grateful to God to be able to serve Him, the clergy and faithful as the bishop of this diocese.

You do a lot of traveling. Have you visited every parish, mission, monastery, and other organization in the diocese?

I have visited every parish, monastery and institution of the diocese to my knowledge at least once; most of them more than once. These visitations are important to me and, I believe, to the diocese as well. I feel these trips give the diocese a sense of cohesiveness. And I intend, with God’s help, to continue as long as I am physically able.

How often do you plan to see each community?

It would be ideal to see every community at least once in the course of a year. With over 60 parishes and institutions, that is difficult to do. But that remains my goal. It is also important as the rector of Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco to be a real part of the cathedral life as well. My plan is to be at Holy Trinity at least one Sunday a month. If you do the math, it will take more than a year to visit every parish.

Do you try to time your visits with a community’s patronal feast, or do you work geographically, or what?

It really depends on the parish and the region. In Montana, for example, I try to visit all the parishes and missions during the same visit. I usually find myself visiting most of the Washington State parishes on one trip as well. In the Bay Area, I try to make parish feast days since I can drive to them all. We have seen healthy growth in the monastic communities of the diocese, thanks in part to your prayers and encouragement. How do you see the role of the monasteries of the diocese in relation to parish life? The establishment and growth of missions? Do you have any long-range plans for future growth of monastic life in the diocese?

Monasteries are vital to the spiritual stability of our diocese. We have four very different, but fine monastic communities. Each has its particular gift to offer the diocese. Each is a place of spiritual recreation and restoration. The St. John Monastery has, perhaps, played a more prominent role in the establishment and growth of missions in that Fr. Jonah has been at various times in charge of one or more missions. It is a great temptation—one to be avoided if possible—to use monk priests to serve smaller parishes and missions. Nevertheless, many of our missions have a connection to St. John Monastery.

How do you expect the reconciliation between ROCOR and the Moscow Patriarchate to affect us?

I think the main affect will be a closer fraternal relation between ROCOR and our diocese. Already, there have been several occasions when our clergy have served together with ROCOR and MP clergy. I can only think Christ is pleased that the tear in the fabric of His Body, the Church, has been mended. So I do not see this as a threat but a benefit to us all and thank God for this gift.

Any thoughts on PSALM, OCF, OCMC, and other Orthodox organizations that cross jurisdictional lines?
These organizations, while not envisioned in the traditional canonical structure of a local Church, arise out of our need to act together in various areas and present a common witness to our society and the world at large. OCMC, for example, allows all of us to work together, regardless of “jurisdiction,” to promote the Orthodox Faith throughout the world. IOCC helps us make a greater impact in parts of the world where Christian charity is badly needed. Instead of us all doing our own “thing,” we have these vehicles through which we can make a bigger impact. I also think if we are ever going to have one canonical structure for the Orthodox Church on this continent, we need at least to act as though we were one Church.

**What's your vision for the future of the diocese?**

I don’t know whether I have a plan or some particular agenda for the future. I hope I can simply serve as the episkopos—the head slave or overseer—in God’s household. I see my role as managing and directing the many and varied talents of all God’s people in this diocese. Of course, I would like to see us grow. There are still states in which we have no parishes or missions. I would like to see better support of diocesan charities such as Martha and Mary House and Raphael House.

**What are the greatest obstacles we need to address?**

Aside from our own human weaknesses, I think geography is our greatest obstacle. While the clergy and people of the Diocese of New England can get together in a matter of two or three hours by car, it takes us hours by air to get together for any diocesan function. It is expensive for us to get together as a diocesan council, as the clergy of the diocese, or to have a youth or matushka retreat. Kona, Hawaii is a long way from Calhan, Colorado. So, I would say distance is the major obstacle. I also think distance can serve to give missions and even clergy a sense of isolation.

If there were one thing you wish every parish or monastery knew they should do in preparation for a hierarchical visit, what would it be?

I won’t eat you. I am not the FBI or police. I am coming, first of all, as the archpastor. Relax. It is said that the sight a priest likes best is the tail lights of the bishop’s car as he drives away. I hope that never happens in our diocese. I want people to look forward to seeing me as much as I do to seeing them.

**Now that you have seen all parts of the diocese, what word of instruction would you have for us in your capacity as our archpastor?**

Love God. Love each other. Love your neighbor—whoever that may be.

**Having seen the liturgical practices throughout the diocese, do you have a pet peeve that conscientious clergy and parishioners should know?**

I would like us all to use the same service book: *The Priest’s Service Book*, Orthodox Church in America, translated by Archbishop Dmitri. It is not perfect, but it is a publication of our Church and better than a lot of what is out there. There are some with very strong feelings one way or the other about it. But there is no priest or deacon who serves in a parish by his own authority. I would also ask the clergy of our diocese not to use the so-called “General Confession.” It was introduced as a “school of confession,” a means to teach the faithful how to go to confession. It has in many cases replaced real, one-on-one, sacramental confession. If people need help, if they need to be taught how to confess, teach them. But I ask the clergy and faithful to confess regularly and in the traditional manner.

Confession is a problem in many places. I have been in parishes where two people go to confession on a Saturday night, maybe 10 or 15 are at Vespers, but 150 show up in the line for Holy Communion. The fact that people are not going to confession does not make me feel good because I have such a sinless flock; it makes me worried that we are not examining our hearts and preparing properly to receive God’s greatest and most holy gift.
Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the West Coast Communiqué

July 19, 2007

To our beloved, the Faithful Clergy and Laity of the Holy Orthodox Church throughout the Western States:

We greet you in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We gathered together at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in San Francisco, California for our second meeting with our Cathedral deans and clergy, conscious of our need to give a living witness to the unity of the Faith we share. As shepherds of the holy flock entrusted to our care, we are building on the work of our first meeting hosted by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Diocese in Los Angeles on Bright Tuesday, April 10, 2007.

We express our joy and affirm the oneness of our voice as we offer a witness of the truth of the Gospel to those around us. We share a vision that is faithful to our Orthodox Christian Tradition and dynamic in its desire to engage in our common work. Our prayer and purpose is to put that vision into action and effect, to the glory of God Who offers us this opportunity to witness to Him together.

On several occasions we have con-celebrated the Divine Liturgy, partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, as the perfect sign of our unity. It is the Holy Eucharist that renews us and reminds us that it is God, Who uphold and breathe life into everything. For this reason we have agreed to institute the tradition of joining together with our clergy and faithful for a Pan-Orthodox celebration of the Divine Liturgy on the Sunday of Orthodoxy, the first Sunday of Great Lent each year, beginning in 2008.

We have also agreed to work together in the continuing education of our clergy and laity by establishing joint seminars and organizing conferences on topics which affect every diocese and parish. In this spirit, we have decided to jointly commemorate the 1,600th Anniversary of the Repose of Saint John Chrysostom, with the Divine Liturgy and accompanying events planned for November 9-10, 2007.

As we look ahead, building on the work we have begun, we give thanks to our good and loving Lord for His gift of this time together, strengthened by our common prayer and vision. We call upon all of you to pray that our efforts may bear good fruit, for the good of all and unto the salvation of our souls.

With Archpastoral blessings,
Metropolitan Gerasimos
Greek Orthodox Metropolitan of San Francisco
Bishop Maxim
Serbian Orthodox Bishop of Western America
Bishop Joseph
Antiochian Orthodox Bishop of Los Angeles and the West
Bishop Benjamin
Bishop of San Francisco and the West, Orthodox Church in America
Editorial

What’s Right with the OCA
Abbot Jonah

There is much of interest in the sad scandals plaguing our Church, in the east and in the north. Dire warnings of doom, betrayals, and speculations of perverse motives are all over the Internet and discussed widely. Undoubtedly there was egregious misappropriation of funds. While these issues are serious, and profoundly affect peoples’ lives, they need not color the life of the whole Church. The press delights in dirty little scandals that demoralize the faithful. But the reality is quite different. Certainly there are issues that must addressed by the appropriate authorities; certainly there is a tremendous need for healing and a restoration of confidence.

What the scandals expose is the critical need for accountability and transparency at all levels of the organization of the Church: bishops, priests, institutional staff and people in positions of trust and responsibility. These issues expose a weakness in how the OCA was structured and the crisis is an opportunity to remedy those weaknesses. Rather than cast stones—which usually bounce right back because of our own hypocrisy—we must seize the moment and really look at the vision and mission, the strengths and weaknesses of the Church, and work together make a stronger Church.

What we are really called to is repentance: to return to our first love, to the vision of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom which we celebrate in the Eucharist, and to our mission, the dedication to bring the Gospel to America in all its Orthodox integrity. We become distracted so easily by our passions, our self-righteousness (read: hypocrisy) and the temptations of the world. But Christ calls us to lay these things aside and to take up the cross of being His Body, bearing witness to Him and living our lives according to the tradition He has given us through our fathers and mothers, our forebears in the Faith.

If we judge those in positions of authority who have fallen, we only accuse and judge ourselves. It is easier to blame hypocritically than simply to accept the responsibility of cleaning up the mess. We should grieve over our brothers’ sins, not judge them. And in so doing, we come together in compassion. It can strengthen our unity and weld us together in a common task: to take responsibility for the life of our Church.

Authority is responsibility. When authority degenerates into power, egotism, and position, it destroys the image of Christ reflected in those positions of responsibility. “He who would be first among you must be the servant of all.” The chief pastors of the Church are called to be that image of Christ, as are all of the faithful. They fall short; we fall short. But we must constantly return in repentance, encouraging our fathers and brethren in that same repentance and support those who bear the responsibility for our souls. It is indeed a heavy burden. But if we all bear it together in a synergy of love and communion, it becomes the easy yoke and light burden of Christ, in Christ, by Christ. When we try to bear it by ourselves in isolation, we will inevitably fall because it becomes something outside of Christ, and about our own ego.

These points are self-evident to most of us. One of the great strengths of our OCA community is that there are many mature and committed Christians. We are Orthodox by choice, a church of converts. Whether we were born into the Faith, or discovered it later in life on our own, we still have chosen to be Orthodox Christians. We are all “converts,” having committed our lives to Christ and to the Church. If we are constantly in the process of the conversion of our life through repentance, we see and recognize our own sins and thus know that we cannot judge others.

Another strength of our community is the zeal for mission and evangelization, coming from a standpoint of maturity and from an awareness that Christ wants us to sanctify every aspect of our life. It is not about joining the “right” church, the historically correct church, the doctrinally pure church.
It’s about a context for our lives which builds and integrates our whole experience. And that context, that life, that Faith, is worthy of self-sacrifice. So we have worked together to establish missions all over the country. We have worked together to make the Orthodox Faith, its services, life and spirituality, accessible to our American people without dilution. We have denied ourselves our own ethnic and personal agendas in order that people from all backgrounds can enter our church, and be on equal footing with us. We have built and supported monasteries, seminaries and charitable institutions to foster the spiritual vision of our church, so that all might benefit.

The greatest strength of the Orthodox Church in America, however, is that we have full responsibility for the life and integrity of our Church, and don’t rely on anyone anywhere else. We preserve brotherly relations with the other Orthodox Churches but we elect our own bishops, oversee our own finances and support our own ministries. None of the other Orthodox communities in America can say that. Thus we are responsible for our own mistakes, as well as our own victories. And when we have an issue that presents itself, we are responsible, as a single Body in Christ, to deal with it in the spirit of Christ. Yes, we sin; but the sins of one are, ultimately, the burden of all. And the healing and reconciliation of those who have been hurt by sin is the responsibility of us all.

Christ is calling us to take responsibility for the Church that is ours by virtue of our baptism and chrismation. It’s not about how “they” deal with it. It’s about us. It’s our life, our union in Christ with one another. When one is grieving, all grieve. When one rejoices, all rejoice. This is the basic principle of our communion in Christ. The bishops have a particular kind of responsibility, but they are not the Church by themselves; nor are the rest of the laity. How do we support our bishops, so they can bear their portion of responsibility for the life of the whole Body?

If there is a lack of accountability and transparency on the part of the hierarchy, is it not our responsibility to correct it? How could it have arisen had we not abrogated our responsibility to demand integrity from the very leaders we put into office?

It is time to stop indulging our thoughts of laying blame and finger pointing and get to the work of healing and reconciliation. How can we work together to build a stronger, more vibrant Church that will bear witness to Christ, be transparent to Christ and manifest Christ’s love and integrity? Our great strength is that we share the responsibility and have the ability to do this. We call our bishops and church administrators to accountability and we bear the burden of supporting them as they shoulder the yoke of that responsibility. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ. No outsider will come to “rescue” us, or impose one more set of foreign ecclesiastical bureaucrats answerable only to a distant despot somewhere in the Old World. This is the beauty and the responsibility of our autocephaly. It is our great strength. We simply need to put aside the distractions of our passions and accept this responsibility which is given by God: to be the Orthodox Church in this country. This is ultimately what is right with the OCA.

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JEFFERSON AWARD
Presented to Father David Lowell

Head of a house that strives to make all feel at home
by Shelah Moody, San Francisco Chronicle Staff Writer
Sunday, March 18, 2007

As executive director of Raphael House, a homeless shelter for families and their children, Father David Lowell is involved in running every aspect of the program, from fundraising and administration to washing dishes, mopping floors and vacuuming carpets.

Lowell, an Eastern Orthodox priest who has been with Raphael House for 21 years, believes in leading from the bottom up.

“I’m not asking anyone who stays here to do anything that I’m not also doing,” Lowell said. “We’re very organized. Philosophically, I try to work with all the staff members so that we are treating the families the same way that we’d want to be treated — with kindness and respect. Most of the families we see are very scared about the situations they are in, and they take it very seriously.”

Named after an archangel of Judaism and Christianity, Raphael House opened 35 years ago as the first homeless shelter for families in San Francisco. The four-story building, built in 1908 and located at 1065 Sutter St., has three residential floors and 17 bedrooms for families.

Lowell was born and raised in Fredonia, N.Y., where his father worked for General Electric. Lowell majored in religion and philosophy at Birmingham-Southern College in Birmingham, Ala. He joined Christ the Savior Brotherhood, which converted to the Orthodox Church in the 1980s. Lowell is currently the associate priest at Holy Trinity Cathedral, a Russian Orthodox church in San Francisco.

Growing up, he said, “helping people was of interest to me. I thought I’d be a teacher, but I ended up helping families and I loved it. I never imagined I’d be doing this.”

Lowell moved to San Francisco 21 years ago to marry his wife, Elaine, who was working at Raphael House at the time.

“She was working here, and I was a pastor in Atlanta. I switched with the chaplain here. He took my parish in Atlanta and I came out here and started working at Raphael House. I was a caseworker for five and a half years, then the intake coordinator and became the executive director in 1991.”

Lowell and his family live at Raphael House. Not only were Lowell and Elaine married in the chapel at Raphael House, their children, Gregory and Victoria, were born there and grew up with the children of the families who live there.

Raphael House, which feels more like a home than a homeless shelter, is a clean-and-sober living environment. The children’s play rooms are immaculate and stocked with stable wooden furniture and toys that stimulate their imagination. The walls, painted with intricate designs by volunteers, are lined with children’s artwork. Fresh flowers adorn the tables in the dining room, which smells of freshly brewed coffee.

Clients are mostly single women with children, although they have also taken in entire families and single fathers with children. Residents, who usually stay up to 51 days, must be committed to saving money and getting their lives together. They are required to be present for dinner every evening if they are not working, keep their rooms clean and participate in household chores.

“(The environment) is very stable, very predictable, very calm,” Lowell said. “Families come to us in crisis. We work with the school system and the families after they move out of Raphael House, to
keep them stable and to make sure that their children are doing well in school and to keep the families clothed and fed. We tell families, pay your rent first and we can help them out with food and clothing. We can sometimes help with school scholarships for children. We can match a donor with a child who has a particular talent, gift or need.”

Raphael House is a child-oriented program, with after-school programs that include art workshop and tutoring.

“Making this the kind of place where children are happy to be puts the parents at ease because their children are happy and well cared for,” Lowell said, adding that 80 percent of the families who leave Raphael House move into stable housing.

“We have some families who have stayed in contact with us for 20 years because they wanted to, not because they had a problem,” he said. “Sometimes they come back as volunteers. Two of our staff members lived there when they were children. We have 34 staff members and 1,000 volunteers per year, including those who come in on Thanksgiving and Christmas to help.”

In 1995, Raphael House received the Management Center’s Award for Excellence in Non-Profit Management. That year, they also received the San Francisco Foundation’s John R. May award for making a difference in the community and the Sara Lee Leadership Award.

One of Lowell’s goals for Raphael House is to acquire more property.

“We want to be here for the families for years to come,” he said. “We hope, in time, to buy some apartment buildings and to be able to provide follow-up services, where the families can be living in proximity to one another. That makes it easier to pool child-care resources and help with after-school programs.”

Not everyone who comes through Raphael House is appreciative, but Lowell operates on a philosophy of what he calls “gospel idealism.” He recalled the case of a resident who had recently given birth, and because she was going through post-partum depression, repeatedly ignored her infant. The staff at Raphael House was able to get psychiatric help for the woman, who later called to say thank you. “Not every case is happy, but we are still helping people,” said Lowell. “You’re still making a difference in people’s lives.”

For information on Raphael House, visit www.raphaelhouse.org.

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CHILDREN’S HOSPICE

September 2006 Newsletter

Dear Friends,

Autumn goes on, but in contrast to nature, our life becomes more and more varied and saturated. Today we would like to report to you about the life of the Children’s Hospice in September.

Our planned work took place: the medical, psychological and social aid were received; necessary medications and hygienic articles were delivered to our patients; various other activities were carried out.

On behalf of our staff and our patients we would like to thank all the people who have been supporting our hospice.

The number of hospice workers increased in September. We hired two new physicians and a nurse. This had to be done, since the number of our patients had also increased. The health condition of many patients is very serious and the work load on the personnel is very great, which is why our Chief Hospice Administrator is now hiring physicians and nurses for new teams to do our out-patient service.

In order to make counseling by different specialists accessible for our patients, we have concluded an agreement with one of the largest children’s hospitals in St. Petersburg: the K.L. Rauchfus Hospital.

The most important mission of the Children’s Hospice as an organization created on the initiative of the Russian Orthodox Church is pastoral care. More and more, children and their relatives express a wish to meet and speak with a priest at home or in a church. During the years of our work we have seen how much easier it is for people living with faith in their souls to endure grief and to find patience and courage in themselves. Faith changes their attitude towards themselves and the surrounding world. It gives them power to live and to find something good in each day lived through.

In the framework of this mission, we organized a trip by the beginning of October to the Tikhvin Monastery, which holds the wonder-working Tikhvin icon of the Mother of God. We visited Tikhvin for the second time, and there were twice as many persons interested than the last year. Everyone who experienced one meeting with the “Tikhvin’skaya” icon desired to come to the Monastery once again. The rainy weather didn’t deter anyone to take this trip as a valuable experience and as a possibility to share our pains and hopes with the icon in an unspoken dialogue.

The children were welcomed most warmly at the Monastery – like home. After a church service everyone could take rest, get warm and have dinner in the spacious refectory. The way back seemed to us to be faster and easier.

Besides new medical workers, a new social worker began her work for the Hospice in September. The number of programs for social and psychological rehabilitation is constantly on the rise. In particular, at the beginning of autumn we concluded an agreement with the Utrishsky Dolphinarium in St. Petersburg so that the sick children and their relatives can regularly visit the performances of the Dolphinarium for free. Our patients have already visited the Dolphinarium twice. Extremely kind and ably prepared performances with animals always give a feeling of joy to children of any age and distract their minds from sad thoughts.

We are organizing group meetings for the parents of our patients, for children of different ages being cared for by the Hospice, and are establishing a theatre studio of the Children’s Hospice. The planning of these activities has become possible because the management of the Nevsky Cultural Palace “Nevsky” has placed some comfortable rooms at our disposal. These group programs will be organized by Olga Shargorodskaya, who has already been volunteering for more than half a year in the Hospice’s social programs.

Olga began her work in the Hospice as a volunteer. For a year she spent a lot of time and gave much spiritual energy to the regular work in the Hospice. Since the first days of her work, she visited one of the most complicated and lonely families for which we cared. She was deterred neither by the
remoteness of the child’s place nor by the difficulties in her interactions with him. The distinguishing feature of Olga is her knack for instantly establishing friendly and trustful relations with children of even the most reserved dispositions. Children always feel a person. Through Olga’s innate modesty, they could see her true sincerity, reliability and wish to help. Having a pedagogical education, Olga little by little became acquainted with many children and offered them her help in school subjects. As she became a staff worker, she was already acquainted with the structure of the Hospice work. She received some social services in her charge. Besides, she already was “one of us,” for the Hospice’s patients as well as for the personnel.

Olga’s favorite saying comes from a fairy-tale by E. Schwarz: “When the soul of a man craves for a Wonder, make this Wonder for him. He will have a new Soul, and you too….” Every day, imperceptibly and selflessly, this person makes Wonders, both small and great.

On the last warm and sunny days of September, an unusual event took place in the Hospice’s life. We are accustomed to organizing something for our children, so it was a real surprise that they organized by themselves a real celebration for us and for each other. On a Sunday in one of the little and modest public gardens of St. Petersburg, a Wonder happened: the children performed for us and the other sick children a fairy-tale. They appeared before us as real actors, in costumes and with artistic make-up. Thanks to their talent, they refashioned the well-known Russian fairy-tale “Repka” (“The Turnip”) in a modern-day version. The fairy-tale was performed in verses filled with humor; everyone played his own part. The extremely kind and cheerful idea to remake and to perform the fairy-tale was born in a hospital, where the children undergo a serious treatment — hemodialysis. All the actors have a serious and terrible diagnosis, that of chronic kidney deficiency. But they have a great desire to live and to give joy to other people.

The Hospice’s social and psychological rehabilitation service began preparing for the New Year’s Feast. A festive concert for the patients and their relatives, for the staff and the friends of the Children’s Hospice, will take place on December 29 in the Great Puppet Theatre. We thank the management of the theatre for the opportunity to celebrate in its rooms.

Many patients of the hospice have already written their letters to Grandfather Frost (Santa Claus). Like last year, we pledge to make the children’s dreams come true. We invite all friends of the Children’s Hospice to participate in the New Year’s activities.

With best regards and with gratitude for your attention and cooperation,

Fr. Alexander Tkachenko, Executive Director
Fontanka, 155 A
Saint-Petersburg 190068 Russia
+7 812 962 06 02

Note: the Children’s Hospice in St. Petersburg was a charity the children of our diocese supported through their efforts last Great Lent. By the efforts of our children, the Hospice was able to hire a doctor for an entire year!

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The Diocese of the West Mission Deanery Retreat
by Fr. Andrew Jacobs

The Diocese of the West Mission Deanery Retreat was held Monday through Wednesday, January 29-31, at the Life-Giving Spring Retreat Center in Boulder City, NV. This year, the retreat hosted His Grace, Bishop SERAPHIM of Ottawa (now Archbishop SERAPHIM of Ottawa), and the Dean of St. Tikhon’s Seminary, the V. Rev. Michael Dahulich, Ph.D. His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN gave the introductory greeting on Monday afternoon.

During his talk on Tuesday afternoon, His Grace, Bishop SERAPHIM discussed the situation of several Canadian monastic communities in response to a question from the attendees. Vis-à-vis theological education in Canada, His Grace then related very joyfully that, finally, a 96 credit-hour, three-year Master of Divinity Program for St. Arseny Orthodox Christian Theological Institute had been approved by the University of Winnipeg—thus providing Canadian candidates for Orthodox priesthood the means for getting the necessary training “at home.”

His Grace also discussed the history and development of Fair Haven, the Diocesan Center of the Diocese of Canada (now the Archdiocese of Canada), which was purchased in 1988 as a permanent residence for the ruling bishop and all records pertinent to the diocese. Though the property was then a 150-year-old farmhouse with 12 hectares of wooded land and a marsh, many renovations have since taken place, making Fair Haven not only an episcopal residence, but also an administrative diocesan center, and a spiritual center for the diocese.

Although it is 85 kilometers from the present Cathedral in Ottawa, Fair Haven is within easy driving distance from Ottawa, Montreal, Kingston, and Toronto, and is also within driving distance of New York. Fair Haven also fulfills the role of a resource and central reference for the monastic communities that have been established throughout Canada, and is a place of spiritual refreshment for the faithful who visit from all over the country.

On Monday evening, Tuesday morning and Tuesday evening, Fr. Michael Dahulich addressed the retreat participants. Under the general topic of “Pastoral Reflections,” his themes for the talks were “Preach Christ,” “Love the People” and “Don’t Compromise the Faith,” respectively. Fr. Michael imparted his rare mixture of deep Pauline scholarship and incisive, practical pastoral insight, urging those priests present to preach Christ always as the author and finisher of our faith, Who cannot be taught enough to the people in this spiritually difficult world.

Fr. Michael also lauded the missionary endeavors of the Diocese of the West, encouraging the clergy and laity in attendance to continue planting churches and engaging in the optimistic, steadfast approach to Orthodoxy that is the hallmark of missionary effort. Citing our successes, and recent instances of successful missionizing in Pennsylvania, he encouraged the missionary effort of the Diocese of

His Eminence, Archbishop SERAPHIM of Ottawa and all Canada

V. Rev. Michael Dahulich, Dean of St. Tikhon’s Seminary
the West as a positive exemplar for missionary effort in the OCA as a whole.

Paramount in this missionizing, as Fr. Dahulich presented it, is the love of the pastor for his people, and the very basis of that love is adherence to the faith as handed down to us by our Church. Integral to that tradition is the good shepherd, who gives his all for his flock, and whose love is an unflagging support and assurance to his flock. The good shepherd hears the members of his flock and pays heed to their necessities, and they follow him because they know and trust him.

Cogently and generously imparting his wisdom to the audience in answer to questions, even in break periods, Fr. Michael offered insight into such crucial matters as the relationship between truth and love. Offering up proofs from Scripture and the Fathers (especially the Apostle Paul), Fr. Michael also shone a light on his own life in Christ, rendering for our edification and moral support an unmistakably clear and impassioned presentation on pastoral practice in the mission field.

The retreat began on Monday with a moleben led by Fr. Tosi, and that evening, Fr. Michael Anderson led Vespers. Tuesday, the second day, opened with Divine Liturgy led by Fr. Christopher Swanson, and included an evening Vespers led by Fr. John Strickland. Wednesday, which was nominally the final day of the retreat, was dedicated to the special Diocesan Assembly to elect a bishop for our diocese. The day opened with a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, and a brunch, and then the Diocesan Assembly commenced.

**Special Diocesan Assembly Elects Bishop BENJAMIN**

by Fr. Andrew Jacobs

At 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 31, 2007, following the Mission Deanery Retreat, a Diocesan Assembly was held to elect the next ruling hierarch of the Diocese of the West after His Grace, Bishop TIKHON’s retirement. The assembly was gathered at the direction of His Beatitude, the Most Blessed HERMAN, Archbishop of Washington and New York, Metropolitan of all America and Canada.

His Grace, the Right Reverend SERAPHIM (now Archbishop SERAPHIM) presided over the convocation. His Grace began the day by leading a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at St. Paul Church in Las Vegas, where the convocation was to be held.

Following a brunch at the church dining hall, clergy and lay delegates met in the church to pick up their ballots and participate in a moleben led by His Grace. Secretaries for the convocation, Fr. David Brum, Rector of SS. Peter and Paul Church in Phoenix, AZ, and Ms. Nadine Wood, of St. Paul Orthodox Church in Las Vegas, affirmed that there were 50 lay delegates and 50 clergy delegates present. Bishop SERAPHIM then read the voting procedures, and delegates and clergy filled out their ballots and dropped them into the election box at the center of the church. Following this, the ballots were taken into the altar area, counted and tallied by Fr. Eric Tosi and two assistants, confirming that His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN of Berkeley (now Bishop BENJAMIN of San Francisco and the West) had been elected unanimously as the candidate for the Episcopal See of San Francisco, Los Angeles and the West.

The results were announced to all present, and His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN was asked to come into the church. The Very Rev. Joseph Hirsch, Dean of Holy Transfiguration Cathedral in Denver, CO, then revealed the results of the voting to His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN, and the proceedings were closed with a moleben of thanksgiving.

The results of the voting were sent to the Holy Synod of Bishops of the OCA, who were to elect a ruling bishop for the Diocese of the West in their spring session in March. As we now know, on March 20, His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN was elected by the Holy Synod to be our ruling bishop, to our great joy. Also, the Holy Synod elevated His Grace, Bishop SERAPHIM to the rank of Archbishop.
Memory Eternal: Very Reverend Boris Symeonoff

SAN ANSELMO, CA The Very Rev. Boris Symeonoff, pastor emeritus of Saint Nicholas Church here, fell asleep in the Lord on Thursday, January 4, 2007.

Father Boris was born in Kronstadt, Russia, on August 5, 1911. Eight years later, he fled with his family to Estonia, which was at that time an independent Baltic country. Subsequently, he left Estonia for France where, from 1931 to 1934, he studied at the University of Paris.

From 1934 to 1938, he studied at Saint Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute, Paris. In 1943, he returned to Estonia, where he married Olga Vasilievna Pytel. He was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood the same year, after which he served as a “supply priest” in Estonia. From 1944-1951, he served churches and refugees in Thessaloniki and Piraeus, Greece. He returned to France in 1951 and served at Saint Sergius Institute Church, Russian retirement homes, and Saint Seraphim of Sarov Church in Chelles.

Knowing of the Symeonoffs’ interest in serving in the US, the late Bishop JOHN (Shahovskoy) of San Francisco contacted them in France, and they were subsequently received into the Metropolia, as the Orthodox Church in America was known at that time. In 1957, Father Boris was assigned as first permanent rector of the recently established Saint Nicholas Church, San Anselmo, CA. He faithfully served the community until his retirement in June 1987.

Among his many accomplishments, Father Boris was responsible for the building of the parish’s new church in 1968.

Father Boris is survived by one daughter, Anna Riazance, and her husband Andre, who cared for him until the moment of his peaceful repose.

Funeral services were held on Monday, January 8, at Saint Nicholas Church, 102 Ross Avenue, San Anselmo, CA, at 7:00 p.m. The Divine Liturgy and Litya were celebrated on Tuesday, January 9, at 10:00 a.m. Interment was in the Serbian Cemetery.

May Father Boris’ memory be eternal!

Good and Faithful Servant

The Choir of St Nicholas Orthodox Church,
San Anselmo, California
Archpriest Stephan Mehoolick Director

A beautiful selection of hymns from the liturgical year, featuring special melodies (podobens) and contemporary compositions, as well as various traditional tolls on the wonderful bells of St Nicholas. Hymns are sung primarily in English, with some Slavonic and Georgian. $16.95

Order from:
St Nicholas Orthodox Church
102 Ross Avenue, San Anselmo, CA 94960
www.stnicholasmarin.org
St. Christina’s Mission leads Bay Area “Crop Walk”
Rev. Michael Anderson, Rector

Oakland, CA - Fr. Michael Anderson and parishioners from St. Christina of Tyre Orthodox Church in Fremont were asked to lead the way—with their processional banners!—for the 3.1 mile walk around Lake Merritt in Oakland, California during Church World Service’s East Bay Regional “Crop Walk” on April 22, 2007. The coordinator of the walk, Marijke Fakasieiki who had experience with the Orthodox Church in Finland, asked for the mission to come with icon banners to articulate that the walk is an expression of faith and not just a community service project. “Our goal is to make the walk a prayer.” Marijka remarked. “Walkers are praying for the people they are helping as they walk, and people who witness the walk should know that it is the walkers’ faith in Christ that has brought them here.” “It was a joy to have such a public witness to our faith,” shares Fr. Michael. “I can’t even express how wonderful it was to begin the walk by exclaiming ‘Christ is Risen’ and to have the participants, who come from so many different backgrounds, respond with a resounding ‘Indeed He is Risen!’ ”

“Crop Walks” are annual events held in more than 2000 communities in the United States that raise funds to help stop hunger and provide basic necessities of life, such as clean water, wherever there is a need. Every regional “Crop Walk” selects organizations serving the needs of their own local community to receive 25% of the money raised through the walk, while 75% of the money goes to Church World Service to support their developmental and emergency aid projects.

Church World Service is a cooperative ministry of 36 Orthodox, Protestant, and Anglican denominations, providing sustainable self-help and development, disaster relief, and refugee assistance in more than 80 countries.

To find out about the “Crop Walk” in your community, call 1-888-297-2767.
The Monastery of St. John of San Francisco in Manton, California
Abbot Jonah

Following years of searching for an adequate site for the Brotherhood, up and down the Pacific Coast from Monterey to Washington State, the Monastery was able to acquire a former retreat house in Manton, California, on the slopes of Mount Lassen, near Red Bluff and Redding in June 2006.

The new 12,000 sq. ft. facility was built in 1999 as a healing retreat, with 18 bedrooms, plus a four-bedroom guesthouse and freestanding workshop/garage on 42 acres. It has all the space necessary for our community to grow and prosper, both in terms of living space as well as work space, and appropriate room for hospitality. Very little modification was necessary to make the building immediately usable, albeit with a temporary chapel and kitchen-dining facilities. Tehama County was very helpful in expediting the processing of the use permit.

The property was purchased at the end of June 2006, and we began to move in immediately. Through the generosity of our friends, we were able to raise $500,000 in cash for the down payment. This leaves $750,000 in a mortgage yet to be paid off.

The first service was held on our Patronal Feast of St. John of San Francisco, with the Vigil on July 1 and the Liturgy the following day. We have since had our regular cycle of services: daily matins and vespers, and the Divine Liturgy several times a week.

On the Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God, October 1/14, 2006, His Grace Bishop Benjamin tonsured two brothers, one to the Small Schema, the other as Rasophore. With the sacrament of Monastic Profession, and the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and stability, our new home has already been fulfilled as a monastery by the grace of that Mystery.

On July 2, 2007, Fr. Jonah was raised to the rank of Igumen, and enthroned as the Abbot of the Monastery by His Grace, Bishop Benjamin. Nine priests and one deacon served with the Bishop, coming from many different jurisdictions and communities throughout the region.

The Brotherhood of the Monastery currently consists of fifteen men, the Abbot, four small schema monks, two rasophores, two priest-novices, four novices, and two worker/postulants. The brothers range in age from 18 to 70, with most in their 30’s and 40’s. Most are well educated: one holds a Ph.D., and several hold Master’s degrees. We
gladly receive men with no higher education as well. Each brings his own gifts and abilities to the community. We are pleased to offer the fruit of the educational achievements of the brothers to the service of the Church, as a part of the contribution that educated monasticism has always offered.

Almost all the brothers are converts to the Orthodox Faith. The brothers have also come from the whole spectrum of Orthodox communities in America: the OCA, Greek Archdiocese, Antiochian Archdiocese, and with another coming from the Russian Church Abroad. This pan-jurisdictional character of our Brotherhood reflects our vision to be a point of unity for all Orthodox Christians. We have strong brotherly relations with other Orthodox monasteries, as well as Roman Catholic monastics and monasteries.

The guesthouse is well used, and we have expanded the capacity to 16 beds in six rooms. A woman from the Greek Orthodox Church in Stockton and the ladies group of St. James Antiochian Mission in Modesto furnished and decorated rooms in the guesthouse. We have several more rooms for parishes to sponsor. The guests that come, both groups and individuals, are a great support to our work. Hospitality is the intersection of our work and ministry.

The candle factory is set up in a garage, a much better space than in Pt. Reyes, and we have increased our production. The nuns of the Lifegiving Spring Convent in Dunlap passed along additional candle equipment. We have begun production of redwood caskets, and have begun to ship them across the country. The wood shop is well structured for substantial production; all we need is the appropriate time and labor force. Our bookstore is going online, and we are cooperating with OrthodoxCircle.com to increase our exposure. Publications are being deemphasized for the time being, though we have several books being translated by the brothers. These are our main sources of revenue, in addition to donations.

Over the summer we had a “summer novice” program, where half a dozen young men on break from college and seminary, from all over the country, came and experienced monastic life for one to three months. We hope to expand this program to include an educational component as an Institute of Spiritual Formation.

Over the course of the next year, we expect to expand the membership, ministry, work and facilities of the Monastery significantly. As the community grows, the need for additional facilities presses on us. We have already outgrown our chapel, trapeza, kitchen, and library, and will have to double up novices in the cells by the end of the year. God is good!
We need to remedy the heating and cooling situation of parts of our main building before the snow comes. As soon as we can get a new trapeza built, with adequate kitchen facilities, we plan to remodel the existing kitchens in the main building.

The first buildings to have been built are a goat barn and chicken coop. Soon, we will start on the church and a building to house a trapeza/kitchen, candle shop, library and bookstore. We are working with an architect out of Berkeley. The church will be stone and block; the other buildings will be strawbale with steel roofs. A major donor has come forth to begin the work on the church; we are seeking additional donations towards the other buildings. The next phase will be additional cells for the brothers, and additional guest/conference space. The church will cost approximately $500,000; the other building, $200,000. We plan to keep costs down by using our own and volunteer labor from our friends, along with professional supervision. These are opportunities for groups from parishes to help out!

The ministries we hope to expand are focused on our work of hospitality, providing a context for people to retreat, confess, and obtain spiritual counsel and refreshment in their Christian lives. We hope to offer some guided retreats as well as some educational opportunities and conferences. We also hope to expand the markets for our candles, caskets and books.

We continue to operate the St. Eugene's Hermitage in Point Reyes as a podvorye or metochion of our community. There are occasional services, but it is currently not open to visitors.

We invite you to come and spend a few days with us. The new site is about four hours’ driving time from the Bay Area, and about ten hours from Los Angeles or Seattle. There is an airport in Redding as well. We can accommodate families and groups as well as individuals. Please call Fr. Michael, our Guestmaster, for reservations at (530) 474-5964.

DINNER FOR THE FRIENDS OF THE MONASTERY OF SAINT JOHN OF SHANGHAI AND SAN FRANCISCO

Sunday, October 21, 2007
Greek Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross
900 Alameda de las Pulgas
Belmont, CA 94002

Vespers: 5 p.m. (Monastery Choir)
Dinner and Program 6 p.m.
$25.00 for adults and $10.00 for children

The purpose of the dinner is to thank the friends and supporters of the monastery and also to share with them the future plans and vision of the monastery. Igumen Fr. Jonah will present an interesting challenge to everyone concerning the future of monasticism in Northern California. This will also offer everyone an opportunity to be a part of this exciting and vital ministry of the Orthodox Church. Other dinners are being tentatively planned in other parts of the Diocese of the West so that other supporters may be thanked and given the opportunity to share in the vision and plan of the Monastery of St. John.

If you are interested, please contact the Monastery at (530) 474-5964 (Ask for Fr. Michael).
The Ones Who Got Out
V. Rev. Alexander Lisenko

The past century has been replete with traumatic, unexpected migrations of whole groups of people forced to leave their cherished homes behind, totally uprooting their lives. Even now, as this article is being written, a last-ditch attempt is being made by those dreading the new regime in Gaza to flee that troubled region before it is too late. Other Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, and Israel have been all but depleted of their sizeable Christian populations. And who can forget the images of the clogged highways out of New Orleans as Hurricane Katrina, in this case a natural disaster, drove so many to distant destinations, in many cases never to return again. These scenes provide some idea of what was a frantic, haphazard exodus during the Revolution and Civil War between 1917 and 1920 as the Soviet government was tightening its control. Up to that time, immigration from the Russian Empire was mostly Jewish, while representatives of various Slavic groups immigrated from neighboring Austro-Hungary, many of whom were involved in the emergence of numerous Orthodox parishes under the auspices of the Russian Church and served by clergy from Russia. In contrast to those immigrating to the United States in the subsequent waves, these came primarily for the same reasons as did all the other previous groups—to avail themselves of the opportunities life in America had to offer. True, these groups had reasons to be unhappy with their lot, but their decision to leave was not a matter of survival as it was for what has been termed the “first wave” of Russian immigrants, which contained a large number of representatives of the old regime, White Army veterans, and others who felt personally threatened by Soviet rule and did not share its ideals. Moreover, none of the previous groups encountered any resistance to their departure from local authorities. Just about anyone who left Russia after 1917 had tales of narrow escapes, backbreaking treks (often by foot) eastward or westward to distant border crossings, or exhausting journeys on overcrowded steamers. Many who tried to emigrate succumbed to rampant disease or pursuing Bolsheviks. The ones who did make it were obliged to sever all ties with anyone left behind, for whom any such contact was likely to be hazardous.

The first question faced by these expatriates, of course, was where to establish themselves. The countries on which they initially set foot were not necessarily the most hospitable ones. But hospitable or not, just about every European country acquired a sizeable contingent of Russian immigrants, with France, Germany, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia in the lead, as well as the countries which had been part of the Russian Empire and already had an existing Russian population—Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. And for those who went east to leave Russia, there were Harbin, Peking, Tientsin, as well as Japan, Korea and Australia. The United States was a desired destination for many, but this possibility was restricted drastically by congressional acts in 1921 and 1924, which established maximum quotas for all immigrants that were highly preferential in favor of immigrants from northwestern Europe, who made up 85% of the annual quota of 165,000; 86.5% of the former were from Germany, Great Britain and Ireland, while of the latter those claiming Russia as their point of origin were allowed a mere annual quota of 2,248, which was comparable to the quotas established for much smaller Denmark and Switzerland. But even with the quotas, sizeable communities developed all over the country (especially in the major urban areas), as these immigrants found whatever work they could get and, in many cases, pursued higher education. They became involved in every conceivable profession, and some of them had great prominence in their fields—Sikorsky in aerospace; Rachmaninoff, Stravinsky, and Chaliapin in music; and Nabokov in literature. Here in the West, many of them found spiritual nourishment and a sense of community in parishes already in existence—namely, in San Francisco, Seattle, Portland and Denver—while others started parishes where there had not been any—the parishes in Los Angeles, West Sacramento, Santa Rosa, Berkeley and San Diego were all started by these “first wave” immigrants. An array of organizations emerged in the various communities, including charitable ones devoted to those in
particular need throughout the Russian diaspora, such as the Russian Children's Welfare Society, still in existence after 80 years.

By the onset of the Second World War, the majority of these “first wavers,” whether they ended up in Europe, the Far East, or the United States, were well established in their new situations, and most had resigned themselves to never returning to their homeland (initially, many had felt that things could change and a return would be possible). But by the late 1930s much of Europe was being overrun by Nazi Germany, a development that affected all of the Russians who had emigrated to Europe. Although the Nazis generally tolerated Russians who were compliant, they did encounter some oppositional activity, notably in France—such as the future Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom)’s involvement in the Resistance and Mother Maria’s sheltering of Jews, for which she was eventually martyred. Even worse, according to a protocol (secret until 1989) of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, signed August 23, 1939 (when Germany and the Soviet Union were still speaking to each other), portions of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland that bordered the Soviet Union would become republics of the Soviet Union, with Germany taking over the western portions. Once again, an exodus ensued (mostly to the German-controlled areas), but not before extensive arrests and executions of the more vulnerable Russians who stayed behind took place. This period of intense anxiety and great losses came to an abrupt halt with the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, and much of Europe was to remain in German hands for the duration of the war.

It was the relentless advance of Nazi troops into Russia that produced what became known as the “second wave” of Russian immigration. Mindful of the likelihood that the German occupation could lead to such an outcome and be welcomed by many, the Soviet government issued a proclamation just one week after the invasion that all prisoners of war were to be regarded as traitors—a proclamation which remained in force well after the war’s conclusion. As it turned out, willingly or unwillingly, enormous numbers of Soviet citizens ended up either as Red Army soldiers in German POW camps, as villagers (mostly women and children) taken to other German-occupied zones in Eastern Europe or Germany itself to work in factories and labor camps, or were given the opportunity to move west by German authorities anticipating an imminent Red Army takeover (this was mostly in urban areas). Although it was wartime conditions that brought about their departure, none of these groups had any intention of returning, since they knew full well that they could not expect a hero’s welcome.

From the outset, “first-wavers” who were in any position to help these new arrivals did so, to the

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**The Russian Children’s Welfare Society:**

Back in 1926, Russian immigrants in New York extended a helping hand to impoverished Russian children in Europe, founding the Russian Children’s Welfare Society. People who themselves were barely managing to make ends meet responded to this call for help with Christian willingness. In the thirties the Society’s chapters started to emerge, with the one in San Francisco being founded in the spring of 1932. From its very inception to this day, all of RCWS’s members have served as volunteers, their only reward being the awareness that they are working for the good of children. Only one aspect of its work has changed—since the mid-nineties aid to hapless children in Russia has become the basic focus of RCWS’s activity. Many years have passed; many remarkable individuals have done work in the RCWS. The flame of love for one’s neighbor burned in their hearts, and their labors have been forgotten neither by the current membership nor by thousands of children who have been helped over these years. Many of its members labored until their very last days.

(From Svetlana Avdeeva, “Pamiat’i Natal’ii Feodos’evny Vasil’evoi, dolgoletnego chlena Obshchestva Pomoshchi russkim detiam v San Francisco”, Russian Life, 19 May 2007, p.8.)
extent they were allowed to do so by German authorities. Thus, they were able to help the scores of children separated from their parents during the forcible transport of villagers to work in Germany. The lucky ones among these children were actually adopted by Russian families. But it was in the period immediately following the war that so many of the first wavers were able to help their countrymen of the second wave. Once again, it was an agreement between powerful allies that caused a scramble among those who found themselves at the “wrong place at the wrong time” to escape their situation. This was the agreement made at the famous Yalta Conference in February 1945, reached at Stalin’s insistence and with Roosevelt’s and Churchill’s consent, that all Soviet nationals who had been citizens as of 1939 were to be returned to the Soviet Union regardless of their wishes. Once the war ended, British and American military authorities were charged with the unenviable task of sorting out who was subject to repatriation. The inevitable consequence of this was a frantic effort to change identities, nationalities and personal histories, which was carried out in a multitude of creative ways. Once again, the “first wavers” came through by supplying their less fortunate brethren with false documents and other fake but convincing evidence of never having lived under the Soviets, thanks to which some were spared repatriation. But countless others were not so lucky, and what followed was incident after incident of scores of people, many of whom had already undergone harsh treatment from the Germans, committing acts of desperation, including suicide—anything to avoid being sent back. Anyone who has lived through these repatriations has heart-wrenching descriptions of what took place, like this one which took place in Kempten, Bavaria, where a church service was interrupted for a reading of the names of the “new immigrants” subject to repatriation:

Once the names were read, all of the “new” ones were ordered to leave the church and take their belongings, as trucks were already waiting to take them to the Soviet camp. The authorities left with their lists. The service was resumed, with everyone praying fervently. Fr. Lyzlov, whose name was on the list of the “new immigrants,” started bidding his daughters farewell. Suddenly we heard the thud of soldiers’ feet. The door burst open and a military unit appeared. The priest kept on serving. The soldiers stood for a while and then left.

Once again we heard the rhythm of marching feet in the echoing corridor. Once again, the doors burst open and once again, a military unit came in. But these soldiers were different. The first ones apparently refused to manhandle those in prayer, but these were prepared to do so. They went ahead and dragged people out of the church, flinging them into the corridor.

All of us in the church—mothers, fathers, children, the old and the young—grabbed each other’s hands firmly and tightly, forming a solid chain. “We won’t betray anyone, we won’t give anyone up!” was the cry.

People were swaying like waves, since they were being yanked one after another out of the
chain. The soldiers were making headway, hitting people with rifle butts. The priest had his teeth knocked out. When I was pushed out, I looked back and saw the iconostasis rocking back and forth, with people and soldiers in the altar, and two people lying in the midst of the church. It turned out later that they had poisoned themselves. Someone was climbing out of a window and was shot down. Children were being flung through windows into the Latvian camp, since Latvians weren’t subject to repatriation. Soon everyone was chased out of the church and thrown into the area in front of the school.⁴

And this procedure was carried out by the “kinder” American soldiers. Similar and even more violent scenes were played out in a number of other camps, especially where British soldiers were involved. Nevertheless, around 500,000 of the approximately 5 million subject to repatriation did manage to avoid that fate, displaying an incredible degree of resiliency by engaging in a “strikingly diverse and comprehensive array of cultural and intellectual activities” in the camps in which they were to remain for a few more years. As an American colonel testified,

I have seen, in my present tour of duty, the same prisoners and forced laborers of the Nazis who had been with me in Germany in ’43 and ’44 still residing in the depressing atmosphere of the abnormal camp-type life . . . and have been amazed at their ability to make the best of their situations by studying, working, and striving to improve themselves.⁵

And all this activity was facilitated, again, by those who were in the less vulnerable position of being in the “first wave.” One such example was Fr. Alexander Kiselev, who had grown up and started his pastorate in Estonia, where the present Patriarch of Moscow served as his altar boy. After spending the war years in Berlin with Fr. John Shakhovskoy, the future Archbishop of San Francisco, he organized the Home of the Good Samaritan in Munich, which was a gathering point for countless displaced Russians and was in the vicinity of several DP camps. This turned out to be a community center which was supported by donations from all over the world, especially the United States. Two years later it could boast of a high school, kindergarten, walk-in medical clinic, icon workshop, social services agency, youth center, printing press for religious material and textbooks and a bookstore.⁶

Although all of these services proved to be of immense value, the majority of their beneficiaries were not to remain in the Munich area, nor in other areas of Russian refugee concentration throughout Western Europe. Most refugees intended to leave the war-torn areas of Europe, with North America being the most desired destination. Fr. Alexander himself, along with his family, came to New York in 1949, although his work in Munich continued for several more years, as long
as needy refugees remained in the area. Not everyone was able to go directly to the US or Canada—many first went to Morocco, South America, or Australia. But eventually, the overwhelming majority did end up either in the United States or Canada. Once again, the earlier immigrants played a key role in the whole process. Although assistance came from various sources, including Protestant and Catholic groups, the most extensive help came through the Tolstoy Foundation, founded in 1939 by Leo’s daughter Alexandra Tolstoy to provide “relief of Russian refugees from World War I and to the preservation of Russian culture in America.” But it was in the immediate aftermath of World War II that the Foundation’s work went into high gear as it took upon itself the entire process of resettling displaced persons; from the initial application, to finding the required sponsors for permanent residence in the US and Canada, arranging and facilitating the actual move, meeting them, and making sure they got settled in at their destination. Alexandra Tolstoy herself testified before the House Judiciary Committee on behalf of the Displaced Persons Act and was instrumental in its passage. This work became a concerted effort, with scores of first-wave immigrants volunteering to be named as sponsors and also doing their part to acclimatize the new arrivals. Those who did not have a specific destination could first go to the Tolstoy Farm not far from New York City and work there. Otherwise, those needing work and not being among the lucky few who found work in their area of specialty right away would gravitate towards particular kinds of work and sometimes towards particular employers, depending on where they located. Thus, arrivals to New York would find their initial employer to be a match factory, while those coming to Southern California would start out as fruit pickers in the orange groves. The Bay Area offered more choices (my own father, a civil engineer, worked as a janitor at the Sheraton Palace Hotel in San Francisco for the first few years), and those who could teach and knew at least some English were able to work at the Army Language School in Monterey (now the Defense Language Institute). But eventually the majority found their niche by utilizing the many opportunities for upward mobility available to them.

The influx of these new arrivals brought more people to the outlying areas, and as a result three Bay Area parishes came into being in the early fifties—Saratoga, Menlo Park, and San Anselmo. And a number of the priests who arrived at that time had themselves had experience in the DP camps, either as priests or laymen. Among them were Frs. George Benigsen, Dmitri Gisetti, Leonid Gladkoff, Paul Jeromsky, Leonid Kaspersky, Nicholas Vieglaïs, and Michael Zelneronok. May their memory be eternal!

By the end of the 1950s virtually all of those having refugee status were well established in their new locations. There were still some arrivals from transitional points such as those in South America or Australia well into the 60s, but the rate at which they were coming had slowed down to a trickle. And it was not long till the mid-70s, when the first representatives of the third wave started appearing, allowed out by a government becoming increasingly sensitive to international opinion. These were mostly dissidents of various stripes, some rather well-known, some taking advantage of the opportunity granted those of Jewish background to emigrate. And from its very inception, this wave contained a percentage of very committed newly baptized Orthodox who became full participants in local parish life, some even
becoming clergy (the late Fr. Victor Sokolov is an obvious example). Once the opportunity to emigrate had been greatly facilitated after the changes of the late 80s, a new element was added into many of our parishes — and not just into the more “Russian” ones, but into the bilingual or entirely English-speaking ones as well, since language is much less of a problem for the newest immigrants than it was for the previous ones.

There is no question that the unanticipated political events of the past century, especially the Russian Revolution and World War II, had a direct bearing on the direction of Church life and parish formation here in the United States. Certainly, the activity of such notable missionaries as Innocent Veniaminov and the future Patriarch Tikhon did not presuppose the successive waves of Russian immigrants who would need to be ministered to in a particular way. As it turned out, pastoral needs and the cessation of reliance on the Mother Church, both administratively and materially, drove the floundering Church in North America to turn inward simply in order to survive and minister as best as it could to the successive waves of immigrants in search of spiritual nourishment and a sense of community. There was a radical shift from the pan-Orthodox, mission-oriented Church that existed prior to 1917 to one that was set apart as Russian, distinct from all the other Orthodox Churches, which likewise came to be defined ethnically. This is the legacy we are living with to this day, even 37 years since the granting of autocephaly eliminated the “Russian” designation in the title of the Orthodox Church in America. But the awareness of the original vision for the Church in North America has been gaining in strength over the past years, and has become the guiding force behind so many positive developments within our Church.

(Footnotes)
3 At: memorial.kiev.ua/expo/eng/1939_2.html
6 Raevsky-Hughes, Olga. “V Dome ‘Miloserdnyi Samarianin.’” In: Sud’by polokeniia... 146.
7 At: www.tolstoyfoundation.org/reliefhist.html
8 At: www.tolstoyfoundation.org/tolstoy.html

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Mission News

New Mission Station: Susanville, California

Faithful Orthodox Christians have been waiting in Susanville for years to establish an Orthodox Church in their town. They knew it would take an enormous amount of work, a full commitment of their time, money, talents and every ounce of energy they could muster. Last spring the time seemed to be right, and a couple of families began meeting and planning, ready to make the sacrifices necessary to establish an Orthodox mission in Susanville. This had been the vision and hope of one of the organizers, Gail Cramer, for many years.

Susanville is a very remote spot in California, an hour and a half north of Reno, Nevada, on Highway 395, and two and a half hours east of Redding. It is an old mining and lumber town nestled on the eastern slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains, east of Mount Lassen, on the edge of the Great Basin desert. The heavily forested mountains give way to flat, treeless plains, with alternating mountain ranges and valleys going on for hundreds of miles. The town has 17,000 in population, though ten thousand are in prisons—the town’s main industry. There is a community college in town. Susanville bustles with new life as people from the coastal cities retire there for the dry, mild climate and the small town atmosphere. There are many churches in town, of all varieties.

After a series of meetings in the home of one of the organizers, Dave Matthews, the first event was planned: to put a book table at a community concert in mid-July. Then the first public service was announced: a Vespers and Evening of Orthodox Music. The Vespers was sung by the monks of the Monastery of St John—which is the closest Orthodox community to Susanville. Several new families came and expressed interest in the mission.

The first Divine Liturgy, with the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Benjamin, was served Saturday, August 25, 2007, using the chapel of the local Episcopal Church. There were over a dozen local people in attendance, representing six families. Abbot Jonah and the brothers of St John’s Monastery served and sang the service. In September, Fr. Samuel Gantt, pastor of St Nicholas of Japan Orthodox Mission in Redding, served for the community.

Liturgies are planned for the third Saturday of each month, for the immediate future. Contact Gail Cramer at (530)251-4913, or Abbot Jonah, (530) 474-5964.

Father John Beal Ordained for Bend, Oregon Mission

On Sunday, September 23, His Grace Bishop Benjamin ordained Deacon John Beal as a Priest, to serve the Mission in Bend, Oregon, at St Nicholas Church, San Anselmo, CA. The solemn hierarchical
Liturgy was glorious, as many local faithful and visitors crowded to witness the ordination of Fr John, and to proclaim “Axios”!

Bend, Oregon is a town on the eastern slope of the Cascades, and has become a rapidly growing city filled with new refugees from urban California.

Several years ago, Fr Stephen Soot, of St Anne’s in Corvallis, OR, contacted and began to serve the faithful Orthodox Christians in Bend, with the intention of establishing a church. The ordination and assignment of Fr John signals a new stage in the life of the fledgling mission church. Fr John and Matushka Medea will take up residence soon in Bend.

The Mission Board’s Kitty Vitko visits
St. Anthony in Bozeman

In early September, 2007 I was able to attend the mission in Bozeman. Before I went I spoke several times to Peter and reviewed the material he sent me as well as the information on their website. It was an incredible experience. Nancy van Dyken was kind enough to host me. She works for LOVE INC and is an incredible resource for charitable and parish ministry. She is also the treasurer for the mission and we several long talks about the mission. I was unable to spend much time with Fr. Peter since the poor man came down with the flu. (I was grateful that he didn’t share that with me) He served a beautiful vigil.

I was very impressed with the parish. They have a beautiful temple. It is rented so I hope they can hold on to it until they’re able to have a permanent home. They were very welcoming and I was able to say a few words about the mission board and deanery. They were pleased to have a mission board member visit.

As I was mentally reviewing the old vital signs grid, Bozeman did very well. They have a strong committed core. They have a full cycle of services. Fr. Peter’s job allows for great flexibility to do week day services. When I got there Sat evening Fr. was teaching an inquirers class. Both vespers and liturgy were well attended.

Their small chapel was filled to overflowing. They also had a well attended Church School. They had a broad spectrum of parishioners which always feels very healthy to me. I have been to missions where I have felt their road will be long and hard. I did not feel that way about Bozeman. It seemed like a thriving mission really ready to take off.

Whatever we can do to support them will be a great investment.

I know one of their goals is to have Fr. Peter be a full time priest I do know from watching other priests over the years that working full time as both a priest and at a secular job and also raising a young family can be overwhelming and dangerous.

The Bozeman area is rapidly growing so the mission has a great opportunity for growth. As I said before, the mission had a healthy, committed feel about it. It was a real blessing to be able to worship with them.
With the Blessing of Archbishop Kyrill of San Francisco of ROCOR, Liturgy was served on the Day of the Holy Spirit, with clergy of the Washington Orthodox Clergy Association at St Nicholas Cathedral in Seattle. 14 Priests from the Greater Seattle area with 5 Deacons celebrated Liturgy together. The Cathedral was filled with parishioners from all over the Northwest.

Blessing of the Continental Divide at Theophany, 2007, by the Colorado Deanery Clergy.

His Grace, Bishop Benjamin with Youth at Monastery of the Life-giving Spring catholikon, Dunlap, California.

Youth Retreat with Fr Michael Anderson, Pacific Central Deanery

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Pacific Central Deanery St. Eugene's Camp, at St Nicholas Ranch, Dunlap, CA July 2007

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