

REPORT OF THE MINNEAPOLIS DEANERY  
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MINNEAPOLIS DEANERY

At the time of writing this report, the second annual 'Synaxis' or purposive coming together of the Clergy of the *Dakotas Missions District* – which was formed two years ago by His Eminence, Archbishop Daniel, for the purpose of facilitating the evangelical and pastoral work of the faithful in relative isolation from other Orthodox communities – is scheduled to meet in Bemidji, MN, hosted by the OCA mission chapel there, currently attached to the altar of St Mary's Cathedral in Minneapolis. Our diocesan Chancellor, Fr Herman Kincaid, continues the tradition of his predecessor and is planning also to be in attendance, representing His Eminence, Archbishop Daniel, and giving physical demonstration of the Diocese's commitment to support the evangelical and pastoral ministry of this whole 'land-in-between.' We will be hearing from each other the challenges we face in this region, and also the exciting and inspiring events that are happening, of which there are many, bearing witness to our belief that the Dakotas, and surrounding regions, are a field ripe for harvest. The workers still are few; but they are inspired workers, and energized, not only by their love for the Gospel but also by the support and encouragement they are receiving from the active involvement of the Diocese in this hitherto 'forgotten' land. (Florida has its Forgotten Coast; we have our 'forgotten mission field,' forgotten, however, no longer!)

We will be reviewing and assessing our goals and our needs, with the purpose of encouraging financial support from Deanery and Diocesan faithful for the work the clergy and faithful are 'tackling' in the DMD.

Again, by way of review, the DMD – which includes Minnesota and could even be said to include Wyoming as far as Thermopolis, and even up into southern Canada – includes parishes not only from the OCA, but also from the Serbian, the Antiochian, and even the Greek jurisdictions. All of them are under their own bishop with respect to their own parish, but as participants in the DMD, they are under Archbishop Daniel, who enjoys a good working relationship with the respective bishops in this region.

Meanwhile, back at the farm – or perhaps, rather, back in the Cities – the Mpls Deanery is undergoing pastoral transitions. We welcome Fr Paul Hodge into our deanery. He grew up at St George Antiochian in West St Paul, MN. He graduated from SVS way, way back when (but years *after* I did!) and, after serving Antiochian parishes in Kansas and other places, he and his family returned to the Twin Cities so he could take care of his aging parents. He has been of immense help to our deanery, especially in his service to St Peter the Aleut in Minot, ND, which still looks for the assignment of a permanent priest to serve them. Years ago, when Fr Paul and his family first moved to the Twin Cities, Fr Paul was among the 'Bemidji bunch,' consisting of two other at the time Mpls Deanery clergy still awaiting assignment. They took turns each month serving the community in Bemidji that is now a chapel attached, as I said, to the altar of St Mary's in Mpls. When Fr Jonathan Proctor of Holy Trinity in St Paul announced his retirement, Fr Paul Hodge was one of if not the first candidate His Eminence considered. We approached Fr Paul with the possibility. He and his whole family were most agreeable to the prospect. But to realize the dream, a transfer from the Antiochian Archdiocese needed to undergo accomplishment. That was finally accomplished towards the end of August, and Fr Paul Hodge, now an OCA priest under the omophorion of Archbishop Daniel, will begin serving Holy Trinity in St Paul as her rector on October 1.

Fr Andrew Jaye retired from Holy Myrrhbearers in St Cloud, MN, the end of July. The Mpls Dean is very proud of Fr Ajaye, and the core faithful of Holy Myrrhbearers who met him and his wife, Brenda, when they first began serving what at the time was a chapel with barely a handful of faithful, attached to the

altar of St Herman's in Mpls (the Mpls Dean's parish). During the four years (or so) Fr Andrew has served Holy Myrrhbearers, the chapel grew, exponentially, and overnight graduated to mission status. And not long ago, what used to be a chapel hanging on with a handful of hearty, stout faithful Orthodox Christians, is now a thriving parish, with over a hundred on average at Sunday Divine Liturgy. Inquirers, seekers, come from far and wide. Holy Myrrhbearers is on the border between the 'City' parishes in Mpls and St Paul, and the DMD parishes of the 'Land-in-Between'. But, their hat that looks like it should sit on the head of a cowboy is in the ring of the DMD.

I announced Fr Ajaye's retirement at the end of July for the purpose of introducing Fr Peter Ries, newly graduated from St Tikhon's, who was appointed by Archbishop Daniel as Rector of Holy Myrrhbearers *Parish* in St Cloud the end of June, 2024. When Fr Ajaye and Brenda rode off into the wild north woods of Duluth, stopping just this side of the edge, Fr Peter and his wife, Sophie (she grew up in NYC!), assumed full pastoral responsibilities at Holy Myrrhbearers. But the exponential growth experienced under Fr Ajaye has not slowed down. Quite the opposite. From all reports (my son and his family attend that parish, so I do hear 'reports'), the parish's growth has if anything sped up! The Deanery, the DMD, together with the faithful of Holy Myrrhbearers, with sincere gratitude to Fr Ajaye and Brenda for revitalizing Holy Myrrhbearers, are very pleased to welcome Fr Peter and his wife, Sophie, into the land of the Cities and into the 'Land-in-between' of the DMD far, far away from New York.

These are some highlights of the Mpls Deanery. But this perhaps is only the front page. There's lots more news in the inside pages. I'll let those stories be told by the other priests of our deanery. I just returned from a three week road trip with my bride of more than 48 years on Saturday, just in time to unload before rushing off to serve the Vigil for the Feast of the Theotokos' Nativity. This is to say that, *a fortiori*, this report is being written beside a lamp burning with oil, and the vapors are telling me that the deadline for submitting this report is near its expiration hour – assuming the hour is midnight and not 5 pm. With this, I'll therefore sign off so I can send it off and be done with it!

fr paul wesche

Minneapolis District Dean