

## DIOCESAN REPORT

### Saint Yakov Center for Orthodox Christian Learning

God Is The Lord

And has revealed Himself to us,  
Blessed Be The Name of The Lord!

An eight sided golden cross standing on top of its golden cupola has been lifted up on the Chapel of The Holy Theophany (Богоявления) in Soldotna, Alaska. Since June, it has shone even on the most cloudy, wet days of the past summer. It reflected in the beam of the sun on sunny days as small planes flew over it. Now, as winter approaches, its golden hue brightens the moonlit nights. A large bell, brought to us from Kodiak, has been hung at the entrance of the wooden walkway approach to the chapel. It has been ringing to announce the start of morning and evening prayers.

On November 19<sup>th</sup>, after the Diocesan Assembly, we had to undergo a surgical procedure to repair a broken right leg. It has been quite slow in healing and we continue to experience a great deal of pain. Although there are many powerful pain medications available to us, we choose not to cloud up our brain and thinking processes by using them. The screws and plates inserted above the ankle could be removed in another surgery, but neither the surgeon nor I think this is advisable; so, we are learning to move a little slower and to accomplish most things at a slower pace.

In spite of all this, with the help of a young man, who is happy to work for \$8.00 an hour, a garden was planted and peas, beets, broccoli, carrots, kohlrabi, cabbage and potatoes have already been harvested. This young man is developmentally disabled and needs our presence for most assignments in order to keep his focus on given instructions. He seems to enjoy working with us, especially when we thank him for helping us. Our proxy hunting and fishing license was given to an "Alaska Man", as he calls himself (not yet Orthodox), who also built the receptacle for the cupol and the walkway to the chapel for \$15.00 dollars an hour. We have received some salmon and hope to receive some more subsistence items from him for the coming winter. A small greenhouse was purchased at the beginning of Spring and we experienced the joy of watching small seeds turn into beautiful flowers with green leaves. As we prepare for the winter, our prayer is that God will allow us to make known and to nurture human seeds of various ages and to proclaim His love and saving power to them.

The chapel is kept unlocked and is heated at all times. As we pray and meet with individuals and small groups, we believe a warm environment will be more conducive to learning. Of course, our gas bill has tripled. So far, the natural gas heater is working admirably. The light fixtures have been installed and a choir and reader's stand was constructed by a Kenai volunteer who said he would come back to build a small altar in the Fall. Hopefully, his priest will allow him to make good on his promise. Due to an as yet un-clarified misunderstanding and lack of communication, the serving of Liturgy in

the Chapel of The Holy Theophany while the Kenai church is being remodeled did not occur as planned. However, a small group gathered to sing the Akathist to the Holy Great Martyr Barbara in December and on the chapel's feast day in January, the priest from Kenai was invited to bless our pond outside and the priest from Ninilchik served the Blessing of the Waters in the chapel, itself. We had a time of fellowship along with some refreshments upon completion of the service. Since we did not advertise, only about 15 were in attendance, most of these were non-Orthodox.

“...I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some...”

1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 9:22

We hope to reach some people through music. A Liturgical Singing Seminar – presenting Skills for Liturgical Singers is being explored at the present time and a choir will be formed to assist in this endeavor. Young mothers will be invited to meet over mid-morning coffee/tea on a weekly basis to explore God's Word together. We hope to begin classes for children and youth for the purpose of learning about God, using the book, “God's Law” (Закон Божий), written and published in 2000 in Moscow by the Russian Orthodox Hiermonk Serafim Slobodskoy. Since the book is in the Russian language, it will serve as an opportunity for us to retain and sharpen our translation skills as we present it in English. Plans are also being made to have an evening mid-week gathering for adults to introduce them to the Orthodox Church. The book, The Orthodox Church new edition by Timothy Ware (Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia) will be used. A time of Study and Conversation will be offered for youth of High School/College age. “Am I Saved?” by Theodore Bobosh, a priest of the Orthodox Church in America, will be the focus of discussion. The possibility of presenting English, Russian, and Greek language classes is also being explored. There are many people of Greek heritage with no Greek Orthodox Church on the Kenai Peninsula.

Contrary to the answer given by a priest in Anchorage to a Kenai parishioner's question of why we were building a chapel, to which he replied that it is a Russian custom for rich individuals to build chapels on their property, we must offer these words of explanation: We most definitely are not wealthy. God called us to bring the light of Biblical learning even to the ends of the earth. After many years of preparation through travel and studies in various parts of the world, He brought us to Alaska almost 20 years ago. With His help we were able to adapt to different social and cultural norms in several countries. We claim to be a Christian Russian Orthodox Missionary, one who has a deep, sincere faith and trust in God's ability to provide us with support and sustenance. We have been called to proclaim His Son, Jesus Christ as Savior, to declare and show the love and care of His Church for others. We hope to continue to joyfully share God's Word among the people of all cultures and heritages in Alaska. We invite all to come together with us, especially our Pentecostal next-door neighbors on the Kenai Peninsula in Soldotna. These are people who have not yet heard the Word of God from the Orthodox perspective. We have been most grateful for our small Social Security check as well as having the opportunity of being employed through our agency, Blagodat' Care, for the Medicaid Choice Waiver Program for the Division of Senior and Adults with Disabilities Services Program for the State of Alaska. This job has allowed us to not only use the money received for building projects and for the upkeep and the purchase of additional acreage for the Outpost of The Holy Great Martyr **Barbara. It has provided an**

**opportunity to engage in God's work as a counselor, utilizing the pastoral training we received in seminary many years ago.**

Ground has been prepared for a small building to house attendees of gatherings at future retreats requiring an overnight stay. Cement has been poured into tubes for the foundation, lumber delivered, and the building of the first phase will begin the first of October. This added space will also enable us to have a place to start a small school. A breakfast program for school age children is being explored through the Food Coalition in Anchorage. St. Yakov Center for Orthodox Christian Learning is already an Agency for the Kenai Peninsula Food Bank and has been utilizing its services. Presently, we have provided assistance to several individuals who are in need on a monthly basis. There are many more families and elders experiencing hardships as the result of our economy at the present time. With God's help we hope to be able to assist as many as we are physically able.

We are praying for God's strength to complete the task assigned to us. We are also praying for more helpers. We have a rich Christian Russian Orthodox heritage which needs to be shown to be very actively engaged in the "making of disciples..." in "...teaching them to observe all things that (He has) commanded (us)...". We invite you, in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, to accept the Call and the Challenge of the Great Commission noted in Mark 16:14-18 and Luke 24:44-49? We must work as a Team!!! We must not be afraid – We must not wait any longer – We must seize God-given opportunities and remain true to our Calling and Decision to follow Christ as His Disciples. We have a wonderful promise from our Lord, Himself, that we will not be alone:

“...Lo, I am with you always  
Even to the end of the age.” Amen.  
Matthew 28:16-20

Respectfully submitted to The Diocesan Assembly in the year 2010,  
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