



**Diocesan Report – 2022 (Covering the period from Nov. 1, 2021 to October 31, 2022)**  
**St. Olympia Orthodox Mission, Potsdam, NY**

We are immensely grateful for the generous financial support of His Eminence, our beloved Archbishop Michael, and of the Diocesan Council. So much of what we report below would be impossible without the grace of God and your most generous support.

**Liturgical and Sacramental Life**

Because of your generosity, we were blessed to have Fr. Paul Fedoroff travel to Potsdam on Sundays to serve Divine Liturgies and also Great Vespers on Saturdays when his schedule allowed. As of September 1<sup>st</sup>, Fr. Nikolay Khalimonov began his assignment as our Priest-in-Charge and we now have Great Vespers and Divine Liturgy weekly again. Fr. Nikolay brings much love and warmth to our parish, and his heart-felt sermons strengthen us for the coming week.

On Wednesday, April 6, 2021, His Eminence served Pre-Sanctified Liturgy. He returned for Great Vespers and Divine Liturgy on July 23-24, 2021. How wonderful to have him with us twice a year! We are located such a distance from the Diocesan headquarters, yet we know His Eminence always keeps us close in his prayers.

While Fr. Nikolay can only be with us on weekends, during the week there are reader's services at the Hermitage of St. Olympia in Edwards, NY, about 40 min. from Potsdam. This is the dwelling of Mother Sophronia (Hofstead), an iconographer and member of our parish. It is a blessing to have her prayers, and she truly gives generously of her time and talents as you will see below.

The liturgical music settings chanted at our Mission are a mix of Byzantine, Slavonic and Antiochian styles. We enjoy excellent congregational participation in singing hymns and responses in English. Occasionally we repeat them in other languages so that those coming from various ethnic backgrounds feel more at home in our Mission. On April 10<sup>th</sup>, our choir performed four hymn settings at the annual Festival of Sacred Music and Text sponsored by the Potsdam Interfaith Community. Two hymns were Russian-style four-part harmony and two were

Byzantine chant settings written by Jessica Suchy-Pilalis. The “performance” (hard to use that word when singing hymns) was very well received and resulted in the conductor of the 200-voice Crane Chorus (Crane School of Music, SUNY-Potsdam) to invite Dr. Suchy-Pilalis to teach and direct the chorus in her chant setting of the Nativity Katavasia of St. Kosmas. The Candlelight Concerts will be this coming December and are recorded for rebroadcast on various PBS stations across the country in coming holiday seasons. During the first rehearsal, Dr. Suchy-Pilalis was asked to speak about the meaning of the hymn and the chant tradition. Probing questions from the student musicians showed that this is a wonderful outreach.

### **Our New Church Building**

As previously reported, we began to transition to our new church in January of 2021. The building is in the Village of Norwood in the Town of Potsdam and was built in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. There is quite a bit of deferred maintenance. While half of the roof had been replaced about six years before we arrived, the other half was in dire condition. Due to the height and extreme pitch, this half was professionally reroofed this past spring. We were able to expand one of the bathrooms in order to make it handicap accessible. A parishioner donated a newer/better stove for the kitchen so we need to upgrade the electrical plug. The boiler is very old and already we have had to have it fixed several times. The same is true of the hot water heater. As with any aged building, the list goes on. However, we remain very grateful to the congregation that gifted this church to us rather than sell it for secular use. They wanted to have it remain a place of prayer—may God bless them.

Little-by-little the building is starting to feel like home as we give it an Orthodox make-over. We have removed some of the pews and have set up the iconostasis. Mother Sophronia has completed three of the main icons for this and we have installed them. The fourth icon (of St. Olympia) is in progress. The iconostasis was designed and built with expansion in mind, and will be fitted, finished and trimmed once we have found a home for the very large pipe organ that inhabits the back wall of the altar area. Before we put the iconostasis in its final place, we plan to paint walls and ceiling, run electrical, expand the solea and refinish the floor.

### **Parish Outreach, Hospitality and Charity**

We inherited something very important and beautiful when we acquired the church building: a local food pantry that operates out of the basement of our church. We are delighted to be their new hosts, and we support them not only with space, access and covering utilities, but also with food donations. We also have pamphlets available for people to pick up or peruse.

We have an on-going clothing drive for an Orthodox half-way house and one of our students organized a women’s products drive to benefit needy students at her campus.

Our Pascha celebration brings in visitors and guests. We break the fast enthusiastically with an impressive spread of ethnic foods, both following the Resurrection Liturgy, and especially after the Agape Vespers when it is a full-fledged parish feast.

In July, we had a booth at the Potsdam Summer Festival. We posted enlarged photos of our

new liturgical home. We had icons, pysanky eggs and Orthodox books for sale, and handed out brochures about our parish to those who showed interest.

When our Mission began, our bulletin was an important means of outreach and we had quite a few people on the e-mail list who were inquisitive, and some who were "seekers." As of September, with Dr. Peggy Wheeler returning as editor, we have resumed this more extensive version of the bulletin, one that includes a spiritual component/information about the faith. It is our hope to expand this aspect of outreach once again.

Greg Kalicin continues to maintain our Mission website and Facebook page, and has added a donation button. You can find us at <http://sarntolympiaorthodoxchurch.org>

Regarding sacraments, we had one adult baptism during the summer. We now have a seminarian at St. Tikhon's Orthodox Seminary and have pledged financial support for him during his studies.

### Finances

Although our attendance at services has not fully recovered from the pandemic, our donations remain at a pre-pandemic level. Our current financial situation is stable, thanks to the Diocesan Grant we are blessed to receive and to the continued support of our parishioners and friends. A full report of monthly finances, prepared by our Treasurer Greg Kalicin, is presented at each Parish Council meeting and at the Annual Meeting of the Parish. In addition to our weekly collection at services, we also receive donations from out-of-town friends and family members, sometimes through the Pay Pal button on our website. In November 2019, we held our first "Giving Tuesday" appeal.

Balances in our bank accounts (as of October 2, 2022) include:

Building fund:       \$35,367.90  
Checking acct:       \$20,675.48  
\$56,043.38 total liquid assets

We are very grateful to all who support us, both from inside and outside of our Mission. We are particularly thankful to our Diocese for its faithful support of our Mission. We would not be able to continue without your support.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Suchy-Pilalis, D. Mus.  
Parish Council President

