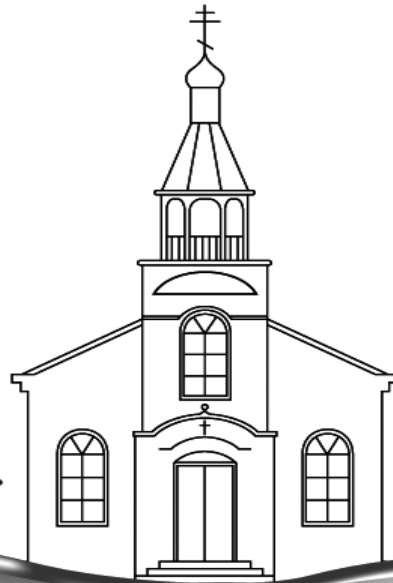


**russian  
orthodox  
church of**



**saint  
nicholas**

**newcastle**

**ABN 71 384 615 722**

# **Annual Report 2011-2012**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Parish Council of Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church is pleased to present the 2011-2012 Annual Report. This Annual Report summarises and reviews parish life and administration for the period from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012.

According to the Normal Parish By-Laws ('the By-Laws') of parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia, it is the objective of each parish to assist the faithful by making available Orthodox Christian prayers, sacraments, teaching and discipline, and by facilitating worthy activity. To this end, the aims of the parish encompass care for the church building and its material needs, provision for the clergy and support for the higher church authorities, work to help others in need, and Orthodox Christian educational work.

This Annual Report addresses the achievements of our parish over the past year in relation to our objective and aims. It also provides an overview of other activities and looks at needs and challenges in the immediate future and in the years ahead.

## **THE PARISH COUNCIL**

The By-Laws allow for a Parish Council that is made up of the rector and other assigned clergy, the Warden, and such lay members as are elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the parish.

The only clergyman assigned to our parish is the Rector, Priest James Carles. Father James was appointed to our parish in December 2002. During that time, he has also served the parish of Saint Panteleimon in Gosford. In September 2011 he celebrated ten years of priestly service.

The Warden, elected in 2011 for a third three-year term, is Nikolai Goura. The lay members of the Parish Council elected at the AGM convened in September 2011 are Anna Morhun, Irene Lupish, Eugenia (Jenny) Millard and Olga Martin. Subdeacon Vitaly Lupish holds an honorary position on the Parish Council but has been prevented by illness from participating in the work of the Parish Council during the year under review.

## **PARISH ACTIVITIES**

### ***Making available Orthodox Christian prayers and sacraments***

Since late 2003 we have had Divine Liturgy on Sunday mornings of the second and fourth weekends of each month. Divine Liturgy is also served on certain Great Feasts.

Although we initially served All-night Vigil each Saturday evening, it has become our practice since early 2010 to serve Matins instead. All-night Vigil is now served only on the eves of Great Feasts and significant commemorations such as the feasts of the Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker and the Protection of the Mother of God.

Our parish choir for many years worked under the direction of Subdeacon Vitaly Lupish. As of January 2010 illness prevented Subdeacon Vitaly from undertaking this role at every service, and a number of choir members have since shared responsibility for directing the reading and singing.

Our parish maintains a strong commitment to the conduct of the divine services in Church Slavonic. We have nevertheless increased the use of English in recent years. This has in part been motivated by practical necessity, and in part by pastoral concern. Our parish now includes a number of people for whom Church Slavonic is difficult to read or understand, even amongst those for whom Russian is their first language.

To address the latter problem, we have begun to obtain service books in Russian script. This year we obtained copies of the *Octoechos*, the service book used for the variable parts of the service on Saturday evenings. In the year ahead, we hope to obtain copies of the *Menaion* in Russian script.

At present the variable portions of the evening services are read or sung primarily in English, with the fixed portions, litanies and exclamations remaining in Church Slavonic. At Divine Liturgy the choir sings primarily in Church Slavonic, with very little in English. The Epistle and Gospel are read in both languages, and certain of the litanies are intoned in English. To ensure understanding, any special petitions for the sick, for travellers, and for special needs, as well as prayers of intercession or blessing on special occasions, are intoned or read in English.

Sermons are given at every Divine Liturgy and delivered only in English. They generally focus on a practical theme drawn from the appointed readings from the Holy Scriptures of the liturgical commemoration on the day.

Evening services are in general attended by very few people, with 10-15 people usually in attendance. Sunday morning services are usually attended by at least 40 worshippers, with more present on significant feast-days and during particular seasons. Illness and infirmity amongst our older parishioners has had a noticeable effect on attendance over the past year.

Four service schedules are drawn up by the rector each year: Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring.

During the year under review a total of 71 services were held, slightly less than in 2009-2010 and 2010-11. There were 32 evening services, 31 Divine Liturgies, and 8 other services. Details are as follows:

| <b>2011-2012</b>                           | <b>Matins or Vigil</b> | <b>Divine Liturgy</b> | <b>Other services</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| <b>Winter 2011</b><br>July-August          | 4                      | 4                     | 1                     | 9            |
| <b>Spring 2011</b><br>September-November   | 8                      | 8                     | 1                     | 17           |
| <b>Summer 2011-12</b><br>December-February | 8                      | 8                     | 2                     | 18           |
| <b>Autumn 2012</b><br>March-May            | 10                     | 9                     | 4                     | 23           |
| <b>Winter 2012</b><br>June                 | 2                      | 2                     | 0                     | 4            |
| <b>Total</b>                               | 32                     | 31                    | 8                     | 71           |

The “other” services conducted included blessings of water, general anointing, and general memorial services.

Major services for the year included the Great Feasts of the Dormition and the Nativity of the Mother of God; the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas), the eve of his Baptism, His Presentation in the Temple, His Entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), and His Ascension; and the commemoration of the Protection of the Mother of God. On the Great Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God we celebrated the sixty-second anniversary of the first Russian Orthodox Services in the Hunter Valley.

Other notable services were for the Procession of the Precious Wood of the life-giving Cross of the Lord on 15 August, the first feast of the Lord (“Первый Спас”) in August; the commemoration of the Beheading of Saint John the Baptist on 11 September and of the Apostle John on 9 October; Forgiveness Vespers on 26 February; and the Translation of the Relics of Saint Nicholas from Myra in Lycia to Bari – our parish feast-day – on 19 May.

In the last days of Winter and during the Spring months we commemorate a number of events of significance to our parish. These are the arrival in Australia on 19 August 1949 – the Great Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord – of Archpriest John Lupish and his family; the first Russian Orthodox services in the Hunter Valley on 28 August 1949, the Great Feast of the Dormition; the patronal feast of the Holy Protection Church in Greta, the first Russian Orthodox church in the Hunter Valley; the feast of the Apostle John, Father John’s name-day; and the anniversary of his repose on 21 November 1977. The Spring months are thus a time of particular focus on the heritage of our parish.

In November 2011 we received the revered “Kursk-Root” Icon of the Mother of God, the Protectress of the Russian diaspora. Orthodox people of diverse backgrounds from across Newcastle prayed in church as an akathist was served before the icon.

In addition to scheduled services, there are many services of ‘need’ in our parish. These include baptisms, weddings and funerals, services in memory of a departed family member, and services of intercession in particular circumstances.

There were four baptisms in the year under review. Those baptised were Marije Alfarah-Bos, an adult, and three children: Zara Alfarah, Thomas Goura and Alexandra Barnes.

There were no weddings or funerals this year.

With Metropolitan Hilarion’s blessing, the Romanian Orthodox Community of the Holy Apostle Andrew continued to make use of our church during 2011-2012. On the first Sunday of each month, a small number of the faithful of this community gather for Divine Liturgy. This community is led by Father Theodor Postelnicescu, a priest of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Australia and New Zealand.

In September 2011, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood, the parish presented Father James with a kamilavka. The right to wear the kamilavka was awarded to Father James by Metropolitan Hilarion in May 2010 for “diligent pastoral service to the Holy Church of Christ”.

Subdeacon Luke Goura served the parish in a number of ways during the year under review. Our senior altar-server, he also read the *Apostol* in both Church Slavonic and English at Divine Liturgy. Subdeacon Luke also took responsibility for changing the vestments in the sanctuary in preparation for the Divine Services.

### ***Caring for the church building and its material needs***

A small number of new icons, most of them donated by parishioners and friends, were framed for placement in church this year. These icons are of the Holy Forefathers; the right-believing Grand Duchess Olga, a gift from Olga Martin and her family; the “Port Arthur” Icon of the Mother of God, a gift from Anastasia Harwood and Natalia Shevchuk; and the Holy Prophet and King, David. The latter icon was donated in memory of the late David Ronke, a convert to Orthodox Christianity well-known in the Sydney parishes.

In 2011 we obtained two new chalices, one large and one small, together with the other sacred vessels used at Divine Liturgy. These items, the first new liturgical vessels obtained in many years, were blessed at the end of Divine Liturgy on Sunday 24 June 2012.

All of these items have served to beautify our small church and to enrich our worship.

As in previous years, a contractor regularly attended to basic maintenance of the parish grounds. Jenny Millard has cared for the gardens.

Our Ladies' Auxiliary has attended to the cleaning and decoration of the church and hall. Flowers were purchased and arranged for special occasions. Matushka Marie Carles continued to bake prosphora for each Divine Liturgy and the five loaves blessed on Great Feasts. The flour for prosphora has for some years been generally donated by the Kfoury family from the Gosford parish.

#### ***Undertaking Orthodox Christian educational work***

The circumstances of parish life are such that very little formal educational work is undertaken. There has nevertheless been educational work in the form of regular sermons, explanations of prayers and services given on special occasions, and in informal discussion, particularly when parishioners are gathered in the church hall after Divine Liturgy.

Two young mothers in the parish, Anastasia Harwood and Olga Martin, continued to co-ordinate a Russian-language playgroup in the church hall that they established in September 2009. Meeting fortnightly, this playgroup gives mothers and their children an opportunity to gather for fellowship and learning in an Orthodox Christian environment.

#### ***Providing for the clergy and supporting the higher church authorities***

Parishes of the Diocese have a responsibility to support the higher church authorities – the Diocesan and Synodal administrations - financially. Such financial support is collected from parishes for the Diocese in the form of a 15% levy on both candle sales and the first collection plate, and for the Synod in the form of a 4.5% levy on candle sales, the first collection plate, donations, membership tithes, prosphora sales, bank interest and other revenue.

The levies on candle sales are applied by the Diocese when candles are purchased from the Diocesan Candle Store. Levies are otherwise payable twice-yearly. During the year under review, Diocesan levies totalling \$4515.24 have since been paid. This includes some levies payable in 2010-11.

In November 2011 we also paid a special levy of \$500.00 towards the annual Diocesan Youth Conference.

#### ***Working to help others in need***

In the year under review, a total of \$631.65 was collected for charitable causes at the request of the Diocesan authorities. This is a significantly less than in previous years. The breakdown of annual Diocesan collections is as follows:

| <b>Annual Diocesan Collection Beneficiaries</b> | <b>When taken</b> | <b>Amount</b>   |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|
| Synod of Bishops Charitable Fund                | November 2011     | 244.00          |
| Orthodox Action Sydney and Melbourne            | February 2012     | 160.00          |
| Holy Trinity Seminary, Jordanville              | March 2012        | 122.65          |
| Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, Jerusalem       | Palm Sunday 2011  | 105.00          |
| <b>Total</b>                                    |                   | <b>\$631.65</b> |

No special collections were undertaken. At the end of the year under review, all of these monies had been paid on to the Diocesan authorities.

**Other activities***Improvements to the church and hall*

In January 2012 the Parish Council resolved to commence a major renovation of the kitchen in the church hall, replacing the original kitchen with one of semi-commercial standard. This was given priority over work on the church as improvements to the kitchen were considered necessary for future fundraising.

In planning the changes, the Parish Council decided that the room in the hall, used variously over the years for accommodation, as an office, and for storage, would be converted to a walk-in pantry and kitchen storeroom. This was necessary because of the loss of wall space in the kitchen for serving windows, the need to install additional facilities such as a hand-washing sink, and because of the need to maintain an open kitchen workspace to minimise the risk of accidents and injuries.

A friend of the parish, Gerry Nakanzy, was engaged to undertake the necessary work. Commencing on 20 January 2012, the new kitchen was completed by 24 February 2012. It included open shelving in the kitchen, a new stove and exhaust hood, deep double sinks with a rinsing tap, a dishwasher, and non-slip floors.

Prior to the end of the year under review, further new items were purchased including a large commercial freezer adequate for the storage of foodstuffs and open shelving for the pantry. Blinds were fitted to the windows and shutters to the serving windows.

Expenditure on the renovation of the kitchen and associated work has been as follows:

| ITEM                  | AMOUNT             |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Labour                | \$10,801.24        |
| Building materials    | \$8,078.88         |
| Equipment             | \$8,847.19         |
| Sundries              | \$109.19           |
| <b>SUB-TOTAL</b>      | <b>\$27,836.50</b> |
| Freezer               | \$4,800.00         |
| Shelving *            | \$806.00           |
| Trolley               | \$464.00           |
| Blinds and shutters * | \$1488.00          |
| Storage containers    | \$46.00            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>          | <b>\$35,440.50</b> |

The expenditure items marked with an asterisk (“\*”) were not all incurred during the year under review.

As this work was being completed, attention was turned to renovation of and improvements to the church building. Initial contact was made with Newcastle City Council concerning approval for the proposed extension to the sanctuary, and quotes were sought from suitably qualified tradesman to replace all four church doors. Replacement of the doors will improve security and – by swinging outwards – increase space in the church and comply with building safety standards.

### *Parish life*

Cleaning and the adornment of the church were undertaken under the direction of the Head Sister, Anna Morhun. Just before Pascha in 2012, a major clean-up was held involving many volunteers.

Towards the end of the year and in response to changes in parish life, the lunches previously prepared on Sundays and major feast-days were discontinued. A roster was set up to ensure that parishioners and friends would still have an opportunity to talk and relax over light refreshments.

During the year, pilmeni, piroshki and other items were prepared for sale by the Ladies' Auxiliary and friends. Raisa Zyza baked a great many kulichi, or Easter cakes, for purchase. Jenny Millard continued to organise successful garage sales.

In January 2012 our Ladies' Auxiliary and friends again participated in Australia Day multicultural celebrations at Lake Macquarie, showcasing Russian culture and selling Russian handicrafts. Just before the beginning of Great Lent, a successful pancake night was held at the church hall, the first major event after the renovation of our kitchen.

In May 2012 we ran, for the first time, a raffle with major prizes and pre-printed tickets. Through Shannon Martin's efforts we received assistance from two Hunter Valley businesses, McLeish Hunter Wines in Pokolbin and the Old George and Dragon Restaurant in East Maitland. This raffle raised over \$2,300.00.

In 2012 a parish Risk Management Sub-Committee was formed. Participating in the work of this Sub-Committee were Irene Lupish, Shannon Martin, Peter Sobinoff, and Anastasia Harwood. The Sub-Committee undertook work to assess risks to the health and safety of parishioners and visitors to our church. Work remains in progress on a Risk Assessment and Treatment Plan, something that each parish of the Diocese is required to submit by 30 September 2012.

### *Diocesan life*

Our small parish has been engaged in the life of the Diocese to the extent possible given our distance from the major centres of Diocesan life.

Father James visited a number of parishes in Sydney on the occasion of their patronal feasts. In 2011-12, this included the cathedral in Strathfield; the parishes in Fairfield, Centennial Park, and Blacktown – both the Archangel Michael parish and Father Alexander Filchakov's Holy Protection parish; the convent in Kentlyn; and the monastery of Hieromonk John (MacPherson) near Dungog. He also participated in festive services at the Archbishop's Chapel in Croydon on the second days of Christmas and Pascha, and at Strathfield for Metropolitan Hilarion's name day in November 2011. Some of our parishioners also participated in these services, in addition to visiting the Gosford parish for special occasions.

Father James participated in pastoral conferences and associated services in December 2011, Great Lent in 2012, and June 2012. He was an organiser of the Diocesan Youth Conference held in Wisemans Ferry in December 2011.

In June 2012, Father James, Nikolai Goura, Anna Morhun, Irene Lupish and Philip Richards attended the Diocesan Wardens Treasurers and Senior Sisters Conference.

Our parish responded promptly to Diocesan policy concerning the need for *Working with Children Checks* and *National Criminal History Checks*.

## ***Plans and challenges***

### *Continued work on our church and hall*

The 2009-2010 and 2010-11 Annual Reports set out in detail a number of proposed improvements to the church building. These improvements included enlarging the sanctuary to the right hand side; the refurbishment of the existing sacristy; replacement of the current church doors with sturdier wooden doors that open outwards; replacement of the iconostasis; plastering repairs and modifications necessary in preparation for the frescoing of the church; re-polishing the wooden floor; alterations to the choir area at the front of the church and to the candle-desk at the rear; the installation of air conditioning; and the frescoing of the interior of the church. It is expected that the enlarging the sanctuary to the right hand side, the refurbishment of the existing sacristy, and the replacement of the current church doors will all occur over the coming twelve months. The cost of this work has been estimated at \$45,000.00. The church has the funds to do this, and it can be undertaken with minimal disruption to parish life. Further work can only be undertaken when we have a fully-costed design for the interior frescoing of the church. It is anticipated that such a plan will be available by June 2013.

### *Parish administration*

In 2011 the Diocesan authorities took a number of steps to improve governance at all levels of church life. Instructions were issued concerning employment, awards, ordinations and professional development. The importance of compliance with child safety laws was emphasized. In March 2011 and June 2012 the Diocesan Council held conferences to educate clergy and parish officials about the Church's statutory framework and to provide instructions and advice with regard to risk management, insurance and financial management. These conferences made it clear that there is a great deal that the parish needs to do to ensure compliance with civil law and Diocesan policy. To this end, the Parish Council will take steps in 2012-13 to develop a range of policies and administrative guidelines.

### *Auditing*

At our AGM in 2011 it was not possible to elect an Auditing Committee, there being insufficient parish members willing and able to undertake this role. It was decided at that time to make arrangements for external audit of parish finances. In June 2012, advice was received from the Diocesan authorities that transition to external audit was recommended. During 2012 arrangements for external audit were discussed with a local accountant. The parish received advice that a number of changes to parish accounting must be made in order for the accounts to be suitable for external audit. In partnership with the accountant, the work of reorganising parish accounts has commenced. It is expected that the 2012-2013 accounts will be formally audited.

### *Parish life*

As this report has made clear, there have been many changes in parish life in recent years. Our parish is a diverse one that now includes those Russian Orthodox people who left Europe and China after the war and settled in Newcastle, together with their descendents; families and young people who have come more recently to Australia from Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and other countries of the former Russian Empire; Orthodox Christians from other places, such as Finland and Greece; and converts to the Orthodox faith from various backgrounds. It is important that we find ways for all to be involved in parish life. There are also many Orthodox Christian people living in Newcastle who have been involved with our parish over the years but who have, for one reason or another, fallen away. A challenge for us in the years ahead will be to reach out to and reconnect with these people. To this end, work is already underway on a booklet on the rich history of our parish that it is hoped will be widely distributed, together with copies of our "Newcastle" Icon of the Protection of the Mother of God.



**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION**  
**Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church**  
For the year ending 30 June 2012

|   |                    |                     |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Position at 1 July 2011</b>            |                    | <b>\$75,912.42</b>  |
| <b>Income</b>                             |                    |                     |
| First Plate                               | 4616.55            |                     |
| Second Plate                              | 3582.15            |                     |
| Candles                                   | 5557.00            |                     |
| Prospora                                  | 1057.00            |                     |
| Tithes <sup>i</sup>                       | 620.00             |                     |
| Bank Interest                             | 4647.54            |                     |
| Parish Collections                        | 114.00             |                     |
| Donations                                 | 2170.00            |                     |
| Sales                                     | 258.00             |                     |
| Periodicals <sup>ii</sup>                 | 115.00             |                     |
| GST refunds                               | 3645.00            |                     |
| Miscellaneous                             | 19.40              |                     |
| <b>Total Income</b>                       |                    | <b>\$26,401.64</b>  |
| <b>Expenses</b>                           |                    |                     |
| Clergy                                    | 100.00             |                     |
| Choir director                            | 0.00               |                     |
| Utilities <sup>iii</sup>                  | 1753.85            |                     |
| Telephone                                 | 597.41             |                     |
| Administration & stationery <sup>iv</sup> | 894.85             |                     |
| Diocesan levies                           | 5015.24            |                     |
| Repairs & maintenance                     | 2560.09            |                     |
| Periodicals                               | 161.00             |                     |
| Candles                                   | 1818.00            |                     |
| Insurance                                 | 4165.75            |                     |
| Special purchases and projects            | 17457.46           |                     |
| Altar needs                               | 365.15             |                     |
| Miscellaneous                             | 1116.55            |                     |
| <b>Total expenses</b>                     |                    | <b>\$36,005.35</b>  |
| <b>Profit (Loss)</b>                      |                    | <b>(\$9,603.71)</b> |
| <b>Position at 30 June 2012</b>           |                    | <b>\$66,308.71</b>  |
| Cheque account                            | 10822.23           |                     |
| Term deposit                              | 52705.23           |                     |
| Cash on hand                              | 2781.25            |                     |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>\$66,308.71</b> |                     |

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION****Saint Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church Ladies' Auxiliary**

For the year ending 30 June 2012

|                                 |                   |                     |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Position at 1 July 2011</b>  |                   | <b>\$11,078.98</b>  |
| <b>Income</b>                   |                   |                     |
| Lunch donations                 | 1719.60           |                     |
| Special events                  | 2030.60           |                     |
| Sale of baked goods             | 335.00            |                     |
| Pilmeni                         | 1008.00           |                     |
| Donations                       | 120.00            |                     |
| Interest                        | 300.58            |                     |
| Raffles                         | 2969.60           |                     |
| Garage Sales                    | 5809.80           |                     |
| Hall use                        | 150.00            |                     |
| Miscellaneous                   | 10.00             |                     |
| <b>Total Income</b>             |                   | <b>\$14,453.18</b>  |
| <b>Expenses</b>                 |                   |                     |
| Groceries for lunches           | 1735.81           |                     |
| Groceries for special events    | 585.95            |                     |
| Groceries for pilmeni           | 297.50            |                     |
| Cleaning, kitchen, bathroom     | 83.90             |                     |
| ECC <sup>v</sup> membership     | 22.00             |                     |
| Stationery                      | 4.75              |                     |
| Gifts                           | 145.00            |                     |
| Raffle tickets and prizes       | 661.36            |                     |
| Kitchen renovations             | 12539.68          |                     |
| Kitchen equipment and storage   | 5669.64           |                     |
| Blinds and shutters             | 488.00            |                     |
| Flowers                         | 229.82            |                     |
| GST                             | 599.02            |                     |
| Miscellaneous                   | 203.37            |                     |
| <b>Total expenses</b>           |                   | <b>\$23,265.80</b>  |
| <b>Profit (Loss)</b>            |                   | <b>(\$8,812.62)</b> |
| <b>Position at 30 June 2011</b> |                   | <b>\$2,266.36</b>   |
| Cheque account                  | 1953.24           |                     |
| Cash on hand                    | 313.12            |                     |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>\$2,266.36</b> |                     |

## **NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

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- <sup>i</sup> Tithes are the annual fees paid by parish members.
- <sup>ii</sup> Periodicals are the Diocesan publications offered for sale in church.
- <sup>iii</sup> Utility payments are for electricity, gas, water and the telephone.
- <sup>iv</sup> Parish administration and stationery costs included website fees, stationery and postage.
- <sup>v</sup> The ECC is the Newcastle Ethnic Community Council.