

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014



**russian orthodox
church of
saint panteleimon
gosford**

ABN 98 562 088 123

INTRODUCTION

The Parish Council of Saint Panteleimon Church, Gosford, is pleased to present its 2014 Annual Report.

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.

For the information of parish members, the Diocesan authorities, and the wider church community, this Annual Report summarises and reviews parish life and administration for the period from 1 July 2013 until 30 June 2014, considering the achievements of our parish in relation to the objective and aims set out in the By-Laws. It also provides an overview of other activities and looks at plans and challenges in the immediate future and in the years ahead.

THE PARISH COUNCIL

The By-Laws provide for a Parish Council consisting of the rector and other assigned clergy, and such lay members as are elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the parish. The By-Laws indicate that five lay members of the Parish Council should be elected in addition to a Warden and Head Sister. With eight members in total, our current Parish Council is a little larger than provided for in the By-Laws.

The 2013-14 financial year was the eleventh full year of operation of our Parish Council.

The only clergyman assigned to our parish during the period under review was Priest James Carles, the rector. Father James was appointed to our parish in September 2001, immediately following his ordination to the priesthood. Since 2002, he has also served the parish of Saint Nicholas in Wallsend. In September 2013 it was twelve years since his ordination to the priesthood and in November 2013 it was fifteen years since his ordination to the diaconate. In recognition of his service, in July 2013 Father James was awarded the right to wear the gold pectoral cross.

The lay members of the Parish Council elected at the AGM convened in September 2013 were Rick Golovin, Kate Marcotrigiano, Bill Reid, Sophia Kfoury, Anna Kourbatov, Ivan Teliatnikov and Reader Paul Douriaguine. At the completion of their current terms of office Rick, Kate and Bill will have served continuously on the Parish Council for eleven years.

From July 2014 Sophia was prevented by illness from participating in the work of the Parish Council, and she reposed in the Lord early in November 2014. Sophia served continuously on the Parish Council for ten years, filling the position of Treasurer for the greater part of that time. Prior to her election to the Parish Council, Sophia served on the Auditing Committee for a year. She was a good and faithful servant of our parish, and her loss is keenly felt. May God grant her rest in the Kingdom of Heaven!

Our parish has not had a warden since 2004. The duties of the warden are shared between the members of the Parish Council, the rector included. Moreover, there is no formal Ladies' Auxiliary in our parish. The work of the Ladies' Auxiliary is undertaken informally, with a female member of the Parish Council designated Head Sister. In 2013-14, Kate Marcotrigiano filled this role.

PARISH ACTIVITIES

Making available Orthodox Christian prayers and sacraments

For many years now it has been our custom to serve Matins on Saturday evenings and Divine Liturgy on Sunday mornings of the first, third and fifth weekends of each month. In addition, All-night Vigil and Divine Liturgy are served on a number of Great Feasts. During Great Lent, Vespers with the Passia is served on the first four Sundays and Great Compline is served on Wednesday evenings. On the weekends and Great Feasts when there are no services in our parish, our rector serves in the parish of Saint Nicholas in Wallsend (Newcastle).

From the earliest services in Gosford the community has maintained a commitment to the conduct of the divine services in both Church Slavonic and English. At evening services both languages are used, according to the capabilities and needs of those present.

At Divine Liturgy the choir sings in Church Slavonic and the litanies and readings are in both Church Slavonic and English. The parish choir has functioned under the direction of Olga Ivanovna Itsikson since 2000. Before taking up this role in our parish, Olga Ivanovna served for twenty years as choir director at Saint Vladimir's Russian Orthodox Church, Centennial Park. On the small number of occasions that Olga Ivanovna could not be with us in 2013-14, Matushka Marie Carles conducted the choir.

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, or relating to the particular feast.

Sadly very few people attend our evening services, a trend that is common to most parishes of our Diocese. Sunday morning services are now attended by approximately 65 worshippers. On special occasions more than 100 people will be present. These

include our patronal feast of Saint Panteleimon, Pascha and Christmas. There are frequently many communicants at Divine Liturgy, both children and adults.

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

During the twelve months from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 a total of 99 services were held in our church at West Gosford, the same number as in the previous year. Services were held on all weekends on which we would usually have a service apart from one weekend in April 2014 when our church was closed for renovations.

Details of our services are as follows:

	Matins or Vigil	Divine Liturgy	Other services	Total
Winter July-August 2013	6	6	1	13
Spring September-November 2013	7	7	1	15
Summer December-February 2013-14	8	8	11	27
Autumn March-May 2014	16	11	13	40
Winter June 2014	2	2	0	4
Total	39	34	26	99

Although we had fewer services than usual during the Autumn months because of the closure of our church for renovations, we had an additional service each week during the Summer months. This additional service, Small Compline, was read according to the lay rite, without a priest present. The thinking behind this service was to have the church open for prayer at regular intervals despite the rector being unavailable. Attendance at these services was very modest and it was decided after Pascha that they would not be continued.

Great Feasts celebrated in our parish in the course of the year under review were the Dormition of the Mother of God, the Nativity of the Mother of God, the Baptism of the Lord (Theophany) and the Ascension of the Lord. In 2014 the Great Feast of Theophany fell on a Sunday. In accordance with parish custom, homes were blessed that day and during the week afterwards.

We generally have the General Service of Anointing on the evening of the fifth Sunday of Great Lent. Because in 2014 All-night Vigil for Great Feast of the Annunciation was served that evening, the General Service of Anointing was served on the evening of Monday of the Sixth Week of Great Lent. Forty-four people were present for

anointing. The distance of our parish from Sydney means that it is rare for other priests to assist at the General Service of Anointing.

In 2014 the midnight Paschal service was again served in our church. On the Sunday of Pascha itself we had Vespers at 11.00am, with a number of people attending the service and remaining afterwards to celebrate. This morning celebration of Paschal Vespers has become an important part of the observance of Pascha in our parish, particularly amongst younger families who have recently emigrated from Russia, Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union.

In 2013 the patronal feast of our parish was served on Saturday 10 August. Concelebrating with the parish rector were Archpriest Nikita Chemodakov, the Dean of New South Wales and rector of the Fairfield parish; Priest Dionysios Halim, a cleric of the Indonesian Mission; and Protodeacon German Polorotov, a cleric of the Fairfield parish. All present received as a gift from our parish a Russian-language copy of the akathist to Saint Panteleimon. Over 200 people later gathered for lunch at the Narara Community Centre.

In 2013-14 we continued the practice commenced in 2011-12 of serving general memorial services (panikhidas) on Demetrius Saturday and, when possible, the other Saturdays on which the church appoints commemorations of the departed. We also served a memorial litia for Patriarch Alexis II on Saturday 7 December 2014, the fifth anniversary of his repose having fallen on 5 December 2014.

There were fifteen baptisms, all of infants, in our church during the period under review. The infants baptized were Sophia Sidorkin, Alina (Elena) Lisnyy, Myles (Daniel) Walton, Emelia Belova, Maxim Tomshin, Robert (Artemy) Tomshin, Matthew Shmelev, Sophia Christian, Alexandra Christian, Maria Yakimov, Alexander Sukhov, Thomas Sreteza, Emily Bendevski, Harper (Angelina) Benson, and Samuel (Gabriel) Sheptitsky. Significantly, the baptism of Maria Yakimov, the great-graunddaughter of parish founder Alexander Yakimov, was the one-hundredth baptism in our church at West Gosford.

There was one wedding in August 2013, that of Victor Pinczuk and Christina Brunskill. There were four funerals, those of Igor Sukhov, John Gordeyeff, Valentina Polteva, and our parishioner and chorister Alla Neal. Igor Sukhov, John Gordeyeff, and Valentina Polteva were all buried at the Point Clare Cemetery, a short distance from our church. Alla Neal was buried at the Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney.

In July 2013 Paul Douriaguine was tonsured a reader by His Grace, Bishop George of Mayfield, at Strathfield on the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. Shortly afterwards, the parish presented Paul with an Apostol book in honour of his tonsure. Paul has fulfilled his duties with great diligence.

In September 2013 we observed the feast of the Translation of the Relics of Saint Peter and Fevronia, the Russian Orthodox patrons of love, marriage and faithfulness. At the end of Divine Liturgy a moleben was served for all married and engaged couples in our parish.

On the day of commemoration of Saint Jonah of Hankow on 20 October 2013 a moleben was served for the children and young people in our parish, Saint Jonah having been a great protector of children. Prayers for our children and young people were also offered on 15 June 2014, the feast of All Saints and the Day of Youth of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad.

On Saturday 7 December 2013, the day of commemoration of the Great-Martyr Katherine, we had services in her honour. Our parish has a significant number of parishioners bearing her name, and many of them – together with two from the Wallsend parish – attended Divine Liturgy.

During the course of 2013 we observed the four-hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the Romanov Dynasty, commemorating the Royal Martyrs of Russia at the dismissal of each service. On the final Sunday of 2013 according to the Julian calendar we served a moleben to the Royal Martyrs and a litia for the repose of the souls of all the departed members of the Royal House.

On 6 February 2014 we observed the feast-day of Blessed Xenia of Saint Petersburg, the patronal feast of our Ladies Auxiliary. A moleben with an akathist was served, and afterwards all present stayed behind to share a festive meal. We plan to continue this practice in 2015 and also observe the anniversary of Blessed Xenia on 24 September.

Caring for the church building and its material needs

With the assistance of the Diocesan authorities we purchased our current parish centre in late 2003. The work of fitting it out took place during the first few months of 2004, and the first services were held in early April 2004. In May 2004 Metropolitan (then Archbishop) Hilarion blessed our new church. On 18 May 2014 we formally celebrated 10 years of parish life in West Gosford with a thanksgiving moleben and a parish BBQ.

The parish owns 75 per cent of the building, and the Diocese 25 per cent. As with all property of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia in New South Wales, the property is held in trust by the Russian Orthodox Church (NSW) Property Trust.

Our mortgage was paid in full in December 2008. In February 2009 the Parish Council established a 'Future Fund' to provide for the expected needs of the parish, including the eventual purchase of property for the construction of a permanent church. A regular contribution of \$850.00 per month is made to this fund, which is supplemented by occasional donations. As of the end of June 2014, this fund totaled

\$55,984.91, having increased slightly from \$53,228.02 at the end of June 2013. The modest increase in the Future Fund this year reflected new parish responsibilities in providing for the clergy.

Early in 2014, Nickolay and Natalia Kravchenko carefully re-stained and re-upholstered a set of six chairs used in church. In March-April 2014 major renovations of our parish centre were undertaken. Work began with the repair of the church ceiling, damaged by water some time ago. The lower parts of the church walls were paneled and stained, the walls and ceiling were repainted, old lights were repaired or replaced, new lights were installed, a storage shed was erected, a new electric oven and gas cooktop were installed in the kitchen, the icons cases were cleaned inside and out, and a number of other maintenance and cleaning tasks were undertaken. When the renovations were completed, the icons were re-hung, some changes in position being necessary because of the new paneling. Taking the lead in all this work was Rick Golovin, our long-serving Parish Council member and the original builder of our church. Rick was ably assisted by Craig Koppman, his son-in-law and a steadfast friend of our parish for many years.

A small number of new icons were placed in church this year. Icons of the New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia and of the Righteous Women of Diveyevo were given to us by Katerina Waters. Rimma Nagikh presented us with an icon of Saint Pimen of Ugreshk, and Sergei Schreider brought us an icon from the Holy Land of Saint Mary of Egypt and the Righteous Zosima. The Teliatnikov family gave the parish a beautiful hand-painted copy of the "Reigning" Icon of the Mother of God, a gift in memory of Tatiana Venttsel. Each of these icons was placed in a specially made wooden case ("kiot"), most of which were paid for by friends of our parish.

Regular cleaning of the church continued to be undertaken voluntarily by Katia Waters and Anna Kourbatov. General clean-up days involving parishioners and friends were held before the feasts of the Nativity and Pascha and before our patronal feast of Saint Panteleimon.

Our Ladies' Auxiliary has continued to raise funds for the furnishing and decoration of the church. In August 2013 the Ladies' Auxiliary purchased 16 beautiful white altar server vestments from the Convent of Saint Elisabeth in Minsk, Belarus. In 2014-15 it is expected that we will purchase a similar set of green vestments.

Flowers were purchased and arranged by the Ladies' Auxiliary on special occasions. Nina Golovin and Matushka Marie Carles took responsibility for the cleaning, ironing and changing of church vestments. Matushka Marie continued to bake prosphora for each service and the five loaves blessed on Great Feasts. The flour for prosphora and these loaves has for some years been generously donated by the Kfoury family.

Undertaking Orthodox Christian educational work

For many years, the primary means of formal educational work in our parish has been preaching. Sermons are given on every Sunday and major feast-day. In addition, instructive homilies are given at services of need such as baptisms, weddings and funerals.

Significant emphasis is placed on learning in a liturgical context. All who wish to assist with the reading and singing in church are encouraged to do so, thereby becoming more familiar with the order of services and with the various books used in the Divine Services of the Orthodox Church.

To the extent possible the blessing of new candles, icons, vestments, and honey and other items – in addition to the regular blessings of fruit and Paschal foods – is incorporated into the common worship of the parish. The prayers of the Orthodox Church appointed for such blessings are theologically rich and instructive for the faithful to hear.

Services of need are also used as an opportunity to teach. For example, the scheduling of weddings involves some discussion of the calendar of the Orthodox Church, the cycle of feasts and fasts, and the principle of putting spiritual things ahead of worldly things. Similarly, preparation for funeral services provides an opportunity for the faithful to learn about the Orthodox response to death and the customs that reflect and reinforce our faith.

In 2013 and 2014 the Parish Council provided parish families and households with a wall calendar in Russian and English that included details of feasts and fasts – including the rules of fasting – and the readings for each day. Besides being a warmly-received gesture, this has been extremely helpful in ensuring that our parishioners understand what is happening in church life. The 2014 wall calendar was a commemorative calendar marking 10 years of parish life at West Gosford.

Our parish website and Facebook page, discussed elsewhere in this report, also assisted with Orthodox Christian educational work by sharing information about the practical aspects of the life of the parish, the Diocese, and the wider Orthodox Church. It is expected that this aspect of both the website and Facebook will be strengthened in the year ahead.

During the year under review our parish maintained formal links with the Saint Seraphim Community Russian School in Hornsby and many of our parishioners actively participated in the life of the school. The school principal, Reader Paul Douriguine, reported regularly at Parish Council meetings on the life and achievements of the school, and our rector visited the school at the beginning and end of the year and on the school feast-day in August. In 2015 it is expected that our parish will provide a scholarship to cover the expenses of one or more students. We

continue to look for ways that we can strengthen the relationship between our parish and this young and innovative Russian community school.

Providing for the clergy and supporting the higher church authorities

Our parish took the important step in April 2014 of making available to the parish rector an expense account – a non-taxable fringe benefit – that allowed him to reduce his secular work commitments by one and a half days each fortnight. As the Wallsend parish in which he also serves has done the same, he now has three days per fortnight available for pastoral work. This arrangement, one that involves a significant new financial commitment for the parish, is a trial that will be formally reviewed in February-March 2015.

A small regular stipend is paid to our choir director to offset the expenses associated with undertaking her duties. Honoraria are paid to hierarchs, deacons and sub-deacons visiting our parish on special occasions. As our parish rector has been present for every scheduled service, there has been no need to provide for clergy on a relief basis.

Parishes of the Diocese have a responsibility to financially support the higher church authorities – the Diocesan and Synodal administrations. Such financial support is collected from parishes for the Diocese in the form of a 15 per cent levy on both candle sales and the first collection plate, and for the Synod in the form of a 4.5 per cent 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 payable at six month intervals. In February levies are payable on income received in the period from July-December, and in August levies are payable on income received from January-June. Our parish takes seriously its responsibility to support the higher church authorities in this way.

In September 2013 we paid levies of \$1,413.73 for the period from 1 January 2013 – 30 June 2013. In March 2014 we paid levies totaling \$1,563.82 for the period from 1 July 2013 – 31 December 2013. In October 2014 we paid levies of \$1,481.49 for the period from 1 January 2014 – 30 June 2014.

In addition, between July 2013 and June 2014 we paid levies of \$1,697.00 on candles purchases. We also paid \$500.00 towards the 2013 Diocesan youth conference and \$300.00 towards the convening of the Council of Bishops in San Francisco in June 2014.

Working to help others in need

Each year the parish is asked to take up a number of collections for organisations and causes nominated by the church authorities. As with Diocesan and Synodal levies, our parish takes this responsibility seriously.

In our parish it has also been customary to take up additional collections during Great Lent, the Nativity Fast and – depending on its duration in a given year – the Apostles' Fast. In 2013 and 2014 our Great Lenten collection was for the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Jerusalem.

In 2009 we collected \$3,104.50 for charitable causes, and in 2010 we collected \$4,533.10. The total collected in 2011 was \$2,451.65. In the first half of 2012, \$1819.69 was collected. In 2012-13, \$4334.30 was collected. In 2013-14, a pleasing \$3,194.55 was collected.

The breakdown of Diocesan and Parish collections is as follows:

Diocesan Collection Beneficiaries	When taken	Amount
Synod of Bishops Fund for Assistance	November 2014	\$425.00
Maxim Lvov	February 2014	\$470.00
Orthodox Action		-
Holy Trinity Seminary, Jordanville	Great Lent 2014	\$247.00
Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, Jerusalem	Palm Sunday 2014	\$784.25
Victims of Serbian Floods	May-June 2014	\$400.05
Total		\$1431.30

Parish Collection Beneficiaries	When taken	Amount
Autism Awareness Australia	Nativity Fast 2013-14	\$698.95
Total		\$1763.25

The collections for the child Maxim Lvov and the victims of Serbian floods taken up in response to appeals from Metropolitan Hilarion. The collection for Autism Awareness Australia was an initiative of the Parish Council.

Regrettably, the mandatory collection for Orthodox Action in February 2014 was overlooked. To address this oversight, a donation of \$250.00 was made in November 2014.

As in previous years, collections were advertised in advance and envelopes with details of the date and purpose of each collection were distributed in church and by post. For the parish collection and the Jerusalem collection, labeled money boxes were prepared for parishioners and friends to take home and use to set aside contributions during the course of the fasting periods.

Since 2011 we have contributed US\$1,200.00 annually to the Haiti Orthodox Family Relief Program, an initiative that operates in partnership with the Fund for Assistance to the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia. This money is provided directly to needy Haitian Orthodox families. We renewed this commitment in 2014, donating a further US\$1,200.00.

We also made two further contributions to the charitable work in Haiti of the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia. The first was a monthly US\$10.00 contribution to reduction of the debts of two ROCOR priests in Haiti, paid as a single lump sum. The second was a one-off US\$250.00 contribution to the salaries of teachers in the schools that operate under the auspices of ROCOR's Haiti Mission. Our total contribution to the Haiti mission in 2014 was A\$1,832.40.

Other activities

Parish life

Throughout the period under review, the Ladies' Auxiliary under Kate Marcotrigiano's direction ensured that refreshments were available after each Divine Liturgy, thereby providing an opportunity for people to relax and socialise informally. This has been an important part of parish life.

Our parish website was redeveloped during the second half of 2013 with the assistance of a US-based company, Orthodox Web Solutions. The site is an attractive one that combines a blog-style home page with news of coming and recent events in the life of the parish and the Diocese with information about parish history and administration and practical aspects of baptism, weddings, funerals and other services of need. New content is being added to the website regularly.

Published in November 2013, the new site had by the end of June 2014 received over 9,500 visits, and now consistently receives over 2,000 visits each month. Contact with visitors to the site and the statistical data available to us indicates that it is not only our parishioners and friends who visit but also the faithful from around the world – over a third of visits to our site are from the United States and Canada, and many are from Russia, Ukraine and other Orthodox countries – and those interested in learning more about the Orthodox faith.

The parish also has a Facebook page that is fully integrated with the website and which presents photographs and less formal news items. The level of engagement with our parish on Facebook has steadily increased over the year under review, raising the profile of the parish and assisting in the work of Orthodox Christian education.

Our parish newsletter, previously the most significant means of communication with our parishioners and friends, has been less prominent in parish life in 2013-2014. Only seven issues were published of an expected twelve. There were a number of reasons for this. The increased sharing of information on the website and Facebook came at the expense of the newsletter. In addition, Kira Paznikov stood aside after doing a wonderful job editing the newsletter for three years, and a replacement has yet to be found. The parish nevertheless remains committed to the production of a regular print newsletter.

In 2013 we had our customary October Long Weekend BBQ at Heazlett Park in Avoca Beach, with over 55 parishioners and friends gathering to enjoy the company and the facilities. Rick Golovin organized this event.

In May 2014 our parish bid farewell to Elena Fauris and her family, returning to France to live. Elena had been active in parish life and a member of our choir. Both the blessing of her marriage to Jean-Phillipe Blanloueil and the baptism of their son Maxime were served in our parish.

Sadly, during the year under review the tumultuous events in Ukraine had a negative effect on parish life. Friendships were strained as opposing views were taken and a small number of people ceased attending services in our parish. Our Russian parishioners were dismayed by anti-Russian sentiment in the wider community, and Ukrainian parishioners were hurt by certain words and actions. Our approach as a parish was – together with the whole Russian Orthodox Church – to offer prayers for the deliverance of the Ukrainian land and people from strife and to respond with charity to the needs that arose there as a result of that strife. We continue to pray that conflict between Russia and Ukraine will cease.

Diocesan life

Our small parish has continued to fully engage in the life of the Diocese.

To the extent possible, Father James visited parishes in Sydney on the occasion of their patronal feasts. In 2013-14, this included the cathedral in Strathfield, the parishes in Cabramatta, Carlton, and Fairfield, and the monasteries in Kentlyn and Monkerai. He also participated in the festive services at the Archbishop's Chapel in Croydon on the second day of Christmas in 2014. Many of our parishioners also participated in these services, in addition to visiting the Wallsend parish on the feast-day of Saint Nicholas and on other special occasions. Father James also participated in the Service of General Anointing at Strathfield during Great Lent in 2014.

During 2013 one of the young people from our parish, Nick Carles, participated actively in the organizing committee for the 2013 Teen Retreat.

Father James and Rick Golovin represented our parish at the Diocesan Assembly in December 2013. Father James was Deputy Chair of the Assembly and was later elected as one of the clergy members of the 2013-2016 Diocesan Council. In January 2014 he was appointed to the Diocesan Council Secretariat and in February 2014 he was appointed Secretary of the Governance Committee. He has since participated actively in the work of both the Diocesan Council and the Governance Committee.

Father James participated in the pastoral conference held in Sydney during Great Lent 2014 and in the Divine Services held in conjunction with the Lenten conference.

In August 2013 we published in our parish newsletter Patriarch Kyril's important Epistle on the 1025th Anniversary of the Baptism of Rus', and in December-January

2014 we published Metropolitan Hilarion's Nativity Epistle. In this small way we have endeavoured to strengthen the links between the faithful and the hierarchy of our Church.

Plans and challenges

2013-14

In 2013-14 we identified as our key plans and challenges for the year ahead as the need to improve parish administration, the celebration of 10 years of parish life at West Gosford, and the purchase of a parish home.

Not all that we hoped to accomplish in the area of parish administration during 2013-14 was possible. In part this was because of the parish rector's increased involvement in Diocesan administration. We understand that this work also benefits our parish. Improvements in parish administration remain an important priority for the 2014-15 Parish Council.

Our celebration of 10 years of parish life at West Gosford was simple but successful. It gave us an opportunity to reflect on all that we have been able to accomplish in the course of those 10 years and to focus on what we hope for in the years ahead.

During 2013-14 the purchase of a parish home receded as a goal. Instead, the purchase of land for the eventual construction of a permanent church became our focus.

2014-15

At the 2014 Annual General Meeting parish members will be asked to endorse an appeal to the wider community for financial assistance to purchase land for a future permanent church. If this appeal is supported by the parish membership, it will be presented to the Diocesan authorities for approval early in 2015. It is expected that the carrying forward of this project will be a major focus of the Parish Council in 2015.

A new feature of parish life in 2014-15 will be a regular moleben and akathist to Saint Panteleimon. Beginning in December 2014 there will be two such services in each month, one in Slavonic and one in English. This will enrich the spiritual life of our parish and also give us the opportunity to make some return – in offering prayers for the sick – for all the help that we have received from our parishioners and from our friends throughout the Diocese and beyond.

There are two projects that we hope to bring to fruition in 2015 in collaboration with the parish of Saint Nicholas in Wallsend. The first is to strengthen the observance of the two feast-days of Saints Peter and Fevronia, the Russian Orthodox patrons of love, marriage and faithfulness. We recognise the importance of these things in Orthodox Christian life and for the society in which we live, and wish to do all that we

can to encourage love, traditional marriage, and the faithfulness of spouses to one another.

The second is to prepare a gift-pack for expectant mothers that includes prayers, important information about spiritual life during pregnancy and the first months after a baby arrives, and copies of the icons of the Mother of God "Helper in Childbirth" and "Milk-Giver". In this way we hope to reach out and encourage expectant mothers, helping them at an important and often challenging time of life.

November 2014