

Mission Parishes in the Kansas City Deanery

One may be tempted to think that because of the sprawling landscape and midwestern culture Orthodoxy would not be very attractive, but with four growing missions in a single deanery of the Diocese of the Midwest this is obviously not the case. In the Kansas City Deanery, Father Joshua Lollar, Father Basil Ferguson, Father Michael Kuzara, and Father Joel Wilson are the priests at these missions, and each have offered some background on the establishment and growth of each:

Saint Nicholas of Myra Mission

Lawrence, KS

Saint Nicholas in Lawrence, KS, was originally established as Saint Sophia Orthodox Church in the Bulgarian Diocese of the OCA in 2002. It was later transferred to the Midwest Diocese. The parish met for services for a number of years in a store-front near downtown Lawrence and the University of Kansas (KU). In 2011, the community moved to the Ecumenical Campus Ministries building on KU's campus and had services there for a year and a half. The parish greatly benefitted from the OCA's Mission Planting Grant program from 2012 – 2014. In 2013 the parish acquired property in the center of town with a small house that was remodeled for liturgical use. There is enough land on the property to build a temple in the future.



In addition to the regular cycle of services and a weekly adult study group, the parish is involved in a soup kitchen ministry in Lawrence and sponsors the KU chapter of OCF. The priest in charge, Father Joshua Lollar, also teaches regularly in the Religious Studies department at KU.

Saint Raphael of Brooklyn Mission

Quincy, IL

Saint Raphael Orthodox Mission has its beginning in the late 90's when a few Orthodox in Quincy, Illinois asked for a blessing to begin holding reader services as there was no Orthodox parish or presence for 100 miles in any direction. By 2004 the group had grown and was granted Mission status under the patronage of Saint Raphael of Brooklyn. Being

served at first by visiting clergy, in late 2005 Father Thaddeus Nielsen was assigned priest-in-charge of the Mission until his retirement eight years later. During that time the Mission knew both growth and struggle, while offering the surrounding Quincy area its first Orthodox witness in a consistent and faithful way.

After Father Thaddeus' retirement in 2013 the Mission saw some decline in membership. A few years later Saint Raphael's saw another setback in the loss of its storefront rental space. Under these circumstances the Mission returned to primarily reader services with occasional visits by available clergy in temporary spaces. Through all of this the Faithful of the Mission greatly persevered in the life of the Mission as much as was possible, maintaining regular prayer in Quincy while being able to receive the Sacraments of the Church only as often as such were available. The end of 2017 has seen a change in circumstances, yet again: Father Basil Ferguson with his family has been assigned to the Mission, which is presently in the process of preparing a rented space for regular worship once again. By God's grace, through the prayers of Saint Raphael, Orthodoxy in Quincy is regathering momentum and looks with hope at the labor in this small part of the Lord's vineyard in the years to come.



Joy of All Who Sorrow Mission Joplin, MO

In late 2011, about six months after the great tornado of Joplin we celebrated our first liturgy in Galena, Kansas. We spent nearly a year and a half in Galena and then moved to our present address here in Joplin. Over the course of six months we renovated our over-sized garage into a chapel space. Since that time we have been celebrating Vespers and Divine Liturgy. Over the course of the last several years we have been maintaining an average of 15 to 20 people for



Sunday Divine Liturgy. Within the last few months we had our first adult baptism and will have four catechumens being Chrismated on the Nativity of our Lord. God is good!

Annunciation of the Virgin Mary Mission

St. James, MO

In the early months of 2012, His Grace, Bishop Matthias gave (then) Deacon Joel Wilson a blessing to pursue the planting of a new mission in the area of Rolla, MO in cooperation with the parish of Saint Thomas the Apostle in Springfield, MO. After launching the effort, Deacon Joel and Matushka Tessi learned of several existing Orthodox families in Rolla, and spent most Saturdays during their year and a half at Saint Thomas driving to Rolla from Springfield to hold Reader services. The first Liturgy was celebrated on February 9, 2013, and the following August His Grace, Bishop Alexander named the new mission community "Annunciation of the Virgin Mary". In December 2013, His Grace ordained Father Joel to the Holy Priesthood and assigned him as "Priest-in-Charge" of the new mission. Father Joel and family moved to Rolla and purchased a home in the first half of 2014, and by February of 2015 renovated a large outbuilding to use as a temporary temple, all the while holding Vespers and Liturgy every weekend.

After moving into the new temple space, the mission grew exponentially and in January 2017 the mission received the OCA's Mission Planting Grant. Thanks to the grant, the generosity of the mission's supporters, and the dedication of the faithful at Annunciation, as of December 2017 the average attendance is at 40 people on Sunday morning - usually more kids than adults! A fairly full cycle of services is able to be celebrated each week, a proper iconostasis is being built, and the community is now praying for a new space that is large enough to hold everyone for Liturgy and Social Hour on Sundays.



Glory to God!