

Introducing the Newsletter

Our community has been built on three simple things:

- a. the Russian Christian tradition, as it was given to us by Metropolitan Anthony
- b. the main use of the English language
(but keeping some reminders of the language of those who taught us)
- c. our central location

These three things have proved important for many of the people across Scotland who are drawn to the Orthodox Christian way, and for this reason our community has always been scattered. Our people now stretch from Dumfries to Shetland, and from Musselburgh to Loch Shiel. In addition, many people have become less able to travel because of problems of health, family care, work or income. So it seems we should address the situation as it is, and find other ways of bringing us all together.

A newsletter is one way of doing this, bringing to everyone the experience and impressions of those able to attend occasions which others cannot get to. More particularly, we need a newsletter which also makes space for discussion of the problems people are facing in their lives. We begin in this issue with the spiritual problems of dealing with chronic illness. And I will be happy to hear your reactions to this, your suggestions, and your questions. Let's get conversations going.

I am very grateful to Sr. Elizabeth for agreeing to edit the newsletter. Previously an artist whose photographic installations were exhibited internationally and a university lecturer in graphic communication she is ideally suited for the task, and her study of desert fathers and mothers, with other Orthodox sources, will add many salty asides in which much is condensed in little. We hope that you will enjoy this first issue, and will contribute to the way future issues are shaped.

Fr Alexander

Why is our newsletter called 'The Vine'?

The vine is used as a biblical symbol in both the Old and New Testament to convey spreading out and bearing fruit. Christ says 'I am the vine, you are the branches: he that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing.' (John 15: 5). This reminds us that if our branches bring forth fruit it will be through the grace of God.

The Lord also spoke to Saint Nicholas using the symbolism of the true vine. Saint Nicholas made a pilgrimage to the Holy land and was so moved that he decided to withdraw to the desert and live as a hermit, but he was stopped by a divine voice that told him to return to his native land.

He returned to Lycia and entered a monastic community of Holy Sion, founded by his uncle. But the Lord again indicated another path saying "Nicholas, this is not the vineyard where you shall bear fruit for Me. return to the world, and glorify my name there." So he left Patara and went to Myra in Lycia where he served as Bishop and became known for his compassion, miracles and witness against Christian heresy.

Holy Father Nicholas, please pray to God for us!

Community News & Notices

It is with great regret that we bid farewell to **Fr. Timothy Curtis** of our diocese and his family. Father Timothy's chief source of income ended and he accepted the offer of a lectureship at Northampton University, and has already moved house. The help he has been giving the communities in Aberdeen and Inverness is at a standstill, and we wait to see if any possibility of resuming it will emerge.

Meanwhile **Father John Musther** of our diocese in Keswick has recently been ordained as priest to help the growth of the Orthodox communities in Cumbria. Those who remember our journeys down there in the past to put on liturgies for the local people will recall how fertile the soil seems to be for the Orthodox faith.

Here at home, the community meeting discussed the best way of sustaining active and constructive contributions from all members as equally as possible, and this theme of conciliarity or *sobornost* is one which will continue to be worked out in the detail of our practice. The meeting also agreed to commission a crucifix suitable for Passion Week from Patsy Fostiropoulos, who previously painted the main icons of Christ and the Mother of God. In June, suggestions were made for some two-day gatherings with a variety of things which we could do together, the details of which are still to be worked out, to draw in further some of the people who live at a distance.

Holy Baptism

Sophia, infant daughter of Natalia Kovale and Bartosz Bonkowski, was baptised on 22nd March. She was brought to her first communion by her godmother Svetlana Haljavina and her godfather Vitalis Artamonovs on Sunday 23rd March.

*Keep her ever a warrior invincible in every attack of those who assail her and us;
and make us all victors even to the end through thy crown incorruptible.*

Eternal Memory

Evangelia (Eve) Pease, died at home on 21st January. Her funeral was at St Luke's in Glasgow on the 1st February, and she was buried in our Orthodox section of Dunblane cemetery, with four priests and a crowd of mourners attending.

George Blair, who designed our iconostasis, the grille over the north window, our wrought-iron gate and carved the two panels on either side of the Royal Doors, died in Leominster on the 31st March. His funeral on 11th April was organised by Andrew Morris of our diocese, and attended by family and friends.

Sister Theodora (Leybourne) died in Edinburgh on September 18th. Her funeral on September 29th was attended by her family from Northumberland. She was buried in our Orthodox section of Dunblane cemetery.

*Give rest eternal in blessed falling asleep, O Lord,
to the souls of thy servants departed this life, and keep them in eternal remembrance.*