

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF ST. ELIAS
ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ «Ο ΠΡΟΦΗΤΗΣ (ΑΓΙΟΣ) ΗΛΙΑΣ»
Within St. Mark's Church, Reading

December 2015

Dear Parishioners,

This is my second Annual Report.

We celebrated our final Christmas Service at our former host church, St. Bartholomew, with Fr. Ian's help; followed with our vasilopita in January 2015 - the coin was found by Nikos Giakounidis.

Fr. Constantinos was with us for the Celebration of the Greek Letters and The Three Hierarchs. Mihalis Dispiniadis, 12-year-old son of Andreas Despiniadis, Head of our Greek School, beautifully read the ancient and wonderful poem 'Ithaki' by the celebrated Kavafis plus a short poem (author unknown) for the Three Hierarchs.

We had a sell-out Apokries Dinner Dance at Badgemore Park Golf Club, Henley, which was both successful and with a difference - some brave people entered into the spirit of the occasion, in costume no less, far braver than yours truly. Thanks to Badgemore Golf Club for the smooth running of the evening.

On 25th March we were fortunate to have His Eminence The Archbishop Gregorios of Thyateira & Great Britain, with a number of priest/deacons from the Archdiocese in attendance. Which we all enjoyed. This was followed by our usual supper to honour our special guests who came through busy traffic from London in order to celebrate with us The Feast of The Annunciation as well as The Akathyst Hymn. Thank you to all who worked towards this annual occasion by cleaning, cooking and preparing everything so well.

Our church was packed to capacity for Holy Week, and we are grateful to Fr. Dimitrianos from The Twelve Apostles, Hertfordshire and his able assistant, Andreas, for all they did to make our Holy Week successful. Thank you also to Nikolaos Manousos and his team for setting up the church for Holy Week and to those who stayed to help clear it afterwards. We very much appreciate their efforts. Also to the ladies who helped me decorate the epitafios, to those of you who filled the church, brought red-dyed eggs and tsoureki etc. for handing out to the students and new comers after the midnight service on Holy Sat. to break the fast.

Our final service in St. Bartholomew's Church was on 21 June, 2015 and, on behalf of the Community,

I would like to express appreciation to the team at St. Bartholomew's for allowing Our Church to share their beautiful church for nearly 30 years and for their flexibility and co-operation during the moving period. We wish them well in their new venture.

Despite not having a church in July we managed to celebrate Our Patronal Feast Day (20th July) on the 19th July, using St. Luke's Church Hall to have both our usual feasting luncheon as well as our Patronal Feast Day Service in the same room. Tricky, but we pulled it off with the help of a small band of intrepid workers. We are grateful to Maria Remy, Nick Manousos, Jim and Ria Matthews and my husband, who helped make it

work. Thank you to those who brought food and raffle prizes and who helped clear away afterwards.

I have to admit that I was worried how it would turn out and how this impromptu Service venue would work, but from the moment the visiting priest Fr. Diodoros, began chanting, I realized it was not the place that mattered, but the Service itself.

All in all, it was a successful event thanks to those who came, cooked, brought food and supported us whichever way they could, and proved that where there is a will, there is a way.

Now to our new premises at St. Mark Church, 94 Cranbury Road, Reading RG30 2TA.

It has been a difficult and complicated process to meet the relevant conditions of occupancy, and we have recently been given temporary permission to use the premises, while the more formal Licence is finalized. The UK Law has changed recently and this is making our application more complicated. I would like to thank the clergy and wardens of St. Mark's for their flexibility and co-operation in the last few months. A draft Licence has been received and it has been sent to the Archdiocese Solicitor in London to review.

Our first service (with Agiasmos) at St. Mark Church was held on 6th September, 2015 and was well attended. We were fortunate to begin with Fr. Kristian, a Norwegian with perfect Greek and English and a beautiful voice and manner, who also complimented us by saying that we were the only Greek Church website to be up to date.

We are grateful to the Reverend Oeconomos Ian Graham for coming to Reading every second Sunday to celebrate the Holy Liturgy in English and we appreciate both his services and his guidance to our Community.

Our children are our future. Greek School (now held in church Hall 11 a.m. - 1:15) was able to resume in October, after considerable bureaucratic obstacles, which we are in the process of fixing. It is hoped that with the formation of a Greek School Committee, to start shortly, and consisting of parents, teachers, and congregation members, will help co-ordinate all those involved.

Special thanks to Yiannis Irvine, who has stepped up to the plate when we were in need of a psaltis, in addition to his other services to our church. To Nikolaos Tsigaridas who also helps Nikolaos Manousos as priest's helpers. To our psaltes/choir Mr. George Moudiotis, Mr. Elias Parikos, Mrs. Philothei Strickland and Mrs. Sonia Khuri; the people who make the prosfora and coffee etc, and anyone who has help me throughout this year, in whatever capacity; to Ben and Anastasia Hewson, who kept the website updated, and Anastasia for taking on a lot more on making the Prosfora, without which we would not be able to have our Services. Also I would like to mention Ms Theodora Dimokopoulou and John Gonzalez with their help in raising funds, and Mrs. Maria Remy and Mrs. Lamara Gianidi for their valuable assistance in cleaning the church and dealing with the church collections; to Mrs. Elizabeth Bolter, whose continued help with Elefteria Matthews, for their assistance with Baptisms, has been invaluable.

Unfortunately, sadly and shortly we have to say goodbye to two extremely valuable members of our Community: Elefteria and Jim Matthews, who will be moving back to Cyprus in the near future. We wish them well, good health and prosperity in their new

home, and hope they will be able to visit us from time to time, and are sincerely grateful for all that they have done for our Community.

I would like to give thanks to the members of the Community who have worked hard to ensure that our Church has not only adapted to the changes in the year, but has emerged with the satisfactory financial position shown in the accounts.

Thanks are due to Mr. Andreas Despiniadis for managing the Greek School and the teachers who assist on Sunday mornings, and Mrs. Theano Llewellyn, who has also acted as Secretary to the ecclesiastical Committee throughout a difficult period. Special mention goes to our Greek School students for their hard work and excellent exam results, and to their teachers, Mrs. Theano Llewellyn, and Nikki and anyone who worked so hard to help them achieve their high grades. We all enjoyed the Greek School children's Christmas concert, arranged by Andreas Despiniadis. It was a great opportunity to see all the children entertaining everyone in the church.

I would like now to give thanks to all the members of our Ecclesiastical Committee Officers and Members .

Finally, I should like to pay tribute to Katerina Calce, Panorea and Theo Ziffo and to the Trustees, Nikolaos Manousos, Elias Parikos and Nikolaos Marinis, who have helped with advice and co-operation through trouble times.

Finally, I wish to thank all of you for your patience and support throughout the year, and without which we would not be able to have a Church or Community.

My Very Best Wishes for a Healthy, Happy and Prosperous 2016.

Sincerely,

Calliope Jenkins,
President of The Greek Orthodox Community of Reading.

Looking forward:

Preparations have started for our up-coming APOKRIES DINNER DANCE, which will be held on Saturday, 12th March, 2016 at Badgemore Golf Club, Henley-on-Thames at 7:30 p.m.. - Midnight.

We hope you will come and bring your friends and support our Community. This is our main fund-raising event of the year. Price of tickets are the same as last year: £36 for Adults, £26 Students, £20 children (12 years upwards).

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING will take place on Sunday 26th June, 2016 after the Liturgy and all our parishioners are welcome. Elections will be held.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DONATIONS for 2016 are now due. Due to the high increase in costs we have had to increase membership donations (subscriptions) to £30 per family, and if anyone feels they cannot afford this, please give what they feel they can afford. If paying by cheque, please make it out to: The Greek Orthodox Community of Reading.

With regard to the Licence (Lease), once this has been agreed by our lawyer and the Trustees, it will be effective for a ten year period.

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