

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

September 2016

Dear Parishioners,

This is my third and final Annual Report as your President, as I am stepping down at the 2016 Annual General Meeting on 2nd October. This is normally handed out along with the Calendar, but the next president will be dealing with the Calendar 2016 - 17.

The most important development this year has been the long-awaited granting on 29th February, 2016 of our Licence to rent St. Mark's Anglican Church together with our fellow Orthodox Christians, the Serbians, for our Church services and Greek School. It is a ten-year Licence with a six-month get-out clause, for both parties. Now a year down the line, I feel that it can be said that a good relationship has developed between our host church of St. Mark Anglican Church's wardens/congregation and our own. We are grateful for their co-operation and fellowship. Members of the Anglican congregation, particularly Rev. and Mrs. Brown, have expressed how much they love our icons and feel that our church adds another dimension/completes theirs.

It has been an eventful year, which began well, with Mr. Theodore Ziffo, coming back out of retirement to help our church and community to fill posts of Treasurer, Secretary, and Trustee, as Mr. Nikolaos Marinis, retired and Mrs. Theano Llewellyn stepped down as Secretary. We are grateful to Mr. Marinis for all his previous help and support as Trustee and wish him well. We are very grateful to Mr. Ziffo for filling three vacancies. Mrs. Theano Llewellyn, as well as Miss Theodora Dimakopolou, both had to resign from their duties for personal reasons. We thank them for their hard work as well.

We had another successful Apokries Dinner Dance at Badgemore Park Golf Club, Henley, which raised much-needed funds for our Community. Thanks to Badgemore Golf Club for the smooth running of the evening. Thank you to all who came and supported this important fund-raising event. We were indeed very fortunate this year to have the pleasure of listening to George and Polys, two Reading University students who donated their time and talent, and entertained us so well. They are a credit to their families and we are grateful to them. We wish them every success in their studies.

This year we celebrated The Akathyst Hymn with Father Ian more simply than usual. Thank you to all who joined us for this beautiful service.

What a remarkable Easter we had this year. There was an unbelievable and unprecedented high attendance for Holy Week, during the day as well as the evenings. Our church was packed and overflowing, mainly with conscientious University of Reading students prepared to walk long distances, to come to church. Well done. Many thanks to Fr. Constantinos and Papadia Eleni again for all they did to make our Holy Week successful and their help during the year. Also to the small group of steadfast helpers for setting up the church, and to those who stayed to help clear it afterwards into the wee hours of Sunday morning. We very much appreciate their efforts and devotion to their church. My admiration goes to the group of ladies who from year to year seem to be going from strength to strength with decorating the epitafio so beautifully this year, and grateful thanks to those of you who filled the

church, brought red-dyed eggs and koulouria etc. for handing out to the endless line of students and new comers after the midnight service on Holy Sat. to break the fast.

Each weekly service requires the making of two prosfora, without which an Orthodox Christian church service cannot happen, and, I should like to thank first of all Mrs. Sonia Khuri, who has over many years produced the ROTA for Prosfora and Refreshments, as well as the small group of ladies and Yannis Irvine for their continued reliability and efforts in making sure the prosfora is made and arrives in time for the service to start, and especially to Anastasia Hewson, who went beyond the call of duty with the impressive backup for prosfora. Also, thank you to Nikolaos Manousos, Niko Tsigaridas and Yannis Irvine, who together share the responsibility of helping the priest.

We have over the years been very fortunate to have a selection of faithful psaltes and choir members. There are some small churches that struggle to find such people, namely, George Moudiotis, Elias Parikos, Philothei Strickland, Sonia Khuri, Yannis Irvine (our newest recruit) and yours truly, who have to cope with a variety of different styles of chanting by visiting priests. Thank you.

Mrs. Liza Bolter, Mrs. Maria Remy and Mrs. Lamara Giannidi, have for a number of years taken on the much needed and unenviable task of dealing with the collection tray and counting the money. Thank you. We also thank Mrs. Sonia Khuri, who has also represented us over the year at all the meetings with 'Churches Together'. We are again grateful to Mrs. Liza Bolter and Mrs. Philothei Strickland for their continued help with the Baptisms, and to Maria Remy, George Giovanni, Nedeljka Dekic and Theo Ziffo for the cleaning of the church.

We are grateful to both Fr. Ian Graham, and his psaltis, Alexander Lingas, who often accompanies Father from Oxford and honours us with his chanting to give the service in English. Fr. Ian's help and spiritual guidance, as well as his steading presence during Committee Meetings is invaluable.

This year we celebrated Our Patronal Feast Day on 17th July, and were delighted to welcome His Eminence, Archbishop Gregorios and his assistants to their first visit to our new church. We were fortunate to have as our additional guests Rev. and Mrs. Norman Brown. Thank you to all those who helped set it up. Thank you also to those who supported our special day, brought food and raffle prizes and who helped clear away afterwards.

We are grateful to Mr. Andreas Despiniadis, Head Teacher of our Greek School, and to the teachers who devote their spare time to teach our children so well on Sundays. It is lovely to see the children come in to church for their Holy Communion. Our children are our future. Greek School (now held in church Hall 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.) was able to resume last 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, consisting of parents, teachers, and congregation members, will help co-ordinate all those involved.

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.

Annual Church Memberships are on the up, I am pleased to say, and we are grateful to those who continue to pay these subscriptions, which is an important source of revenue for any church and helps pay the bills.

This report would not be complete without a particular tribute to Anastasia Hewson and her husband Ben, Katerina Calce, Panorea Ziffo and to my fellow Trustees Nikolaos Manousos, Elias Parikos and Theo Ziffo.

Finally, may I heartedly thank you again for all of your support and fellowship throughout my time as President. It has been an honour to serve the Church and Community.

Sincerely,
Calliope Jenkins