

THE NARTHEX

*The believers were first called
Christians at Antioch*
ACTS. 9:26
**August - September
2010**

The Orthodox Church of St. Dunstan Poole-Bournemouth

The Antiochian Orthodox Deanery of The United Kingdom and Ireland
Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East

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A Place of Our Own

At the time of printing the Narthex I do not have any further information on our purchase of the old St. Osmund's building in Parkstone. As you will know, the process is under way and we have engaged solicitors to handle the matter for us. The latest stage is that I have instructed them to contact the Church of England over the covenants that might remain on the building. In this context a covenant is an agreement into which the buyer enters, promising to respect certain obligations as to the future of the building. Regarding the old St. Osmund's church, this might entail certain repairs, if deemed necessary. As to our overall use of the place, there are no problems. Our intention is to buy the building primarily to provide a permanent place of worship for St. Dunstan's Orthodox Community. We shall also seek to maintain a structure that is much loved in the area and is a Grade 2 listed building. We also intend, as before, to continue offering the church hall as an amenity for the local community. In as much as we are promoting the Orthodox Christian religion and often providing a meeting place for Eastern Europeans and others, helping them integrate into British society, we have charitable aims in the legal sense. This is important, as the final stage, before we can take ownership, is that we establish a registered charitable foundation to which the liquidator of the former St. Stephen the Great Charitable Trust, will be able to transfer ownership. The price of the building, set at only £1 is, of course, a nominal fee. This process

will, naturally, entail legal costs but we have currently adequate funds in our account.

The registered charitable foundation will be a company limited by guarantee rather than a trust. This gives full financial protection to the directors. It will also be good if we could have as many directors as is reasonably possible as well as members. At this stage I envisage that directors and members will pledge money regularly to the charity - whatever they have decided that they can afford - and if they are taxpayers, the tax can be recovered under the Gift Aid scheme. This will be part of their normal Christian stewardship and giving to the Church. We need to be aware, however, that we could, if we are not careful, create a difficulty for ourselves. Here, I am thinking about the relationship of the charitable foundation to the parish community within the Deanery. I am presuming, here that the foundation will pay for heating, lighting and maintenance of the building (as well as applying for any grants for major repairs). The parish, i.e. the liturgical community that meets in the building to celebrate and proclaim the Orthodox faith, will still need money to purchase necessary liturgical requisites and make its contribution to support the work of both the Diocese and Deanery (as we do at present). I hope this money will still come from cash collections and sales (e.g. candles etc.), taken at services.

This arrangement would not preclude either body making grants to the other, if needed, as they exist with mutual interests anyway. Money from hall rentals and fund raising activities, would go to the foundation. As you will see, it is important that these matters be properly discussed amongst us, once the time comes to set up the foundation.



All this entails a great deal of work for a very few people at present. Although it is an exciting project and appears to be the answer to many devout prayers, I would ask you to be a little patient for a while longer yet. I have no idea when the matter will be completed and certainly am unable to predict when we shall have services there again. I am, meanwhile, giving thought to how we might best use the building, both in terms of maximising our own use of it and any possible wider use by the local community. His Eminence, for example, has given his blessing for holding concerts of classical and other serious music within the building. This will help our fund raising. I am also considering the building in terms of a liturgical space.

For example, there are some very grave problems associated with the many steps between the current nave and choir. St. Osmund's was, of course, designed for the Western Rite which presents us with something of an obstacle course. I am currently pondering the idea of a portable altar, iconostasis and holy doors below the steps - in that way using half the building. We might also be able to create a *winter chapel* in one of the rooms elsewhere in the building which could be used and easily heated whilst we are building up the congregation's numbers. This is just thinking out loud at present but I should, nevertheless, like to consult widely on all this.

St. Osmund's is a vast space, the size of a cathedral in Orthodox terms. To have the altar and holy table so far from the people does not suit the ethos of worship according to the Byzantine Rite. There should also be, for example, an Iconostasis which, far from being a barrier, is of course, a *window*, marking the meeting place between heaven and earth. It helps signify the mystery of what is happening in the Liturgy where, ideally, the deacon, coming and going between two realms, manifests our tangible contact with our God. This necessarily means that a certain intimacy is important that cannot be achieved when there is too much a space between priest and people. From this point of view, use of the high altar (in the Western sense) is inappropriate and would detract from what is really going on when we serve the Divine Liturgy together. The service itself is an encounter between Christ the bridegroom and his bride, the Church: that this demands closeness is too obvious to need stating.

Meanwhile, you must continue to make this a regular feature of your daily prayers. Ask our holy patron, St. Dunstan again and again to pray

for us. And if we are serious about this venture, each of us needs to assess the contribution we can make to ownership of such a place. Not only as to how we can be involved in running and maintaining the building but also what we should donate financially on a regular basis. In ancient Israel, the tithe, one tenth, was the standard offering to the temple. Today, in our setting, taking levels of taxation into account, this would present difficulties for many. But the point is, we should give *proportionately*, having taken account of what we have to hand, once we have met our usual obligations. This also is a matter for our prayers.

The ownership of the building, however, is not an end in itself. We undertake this task in order to help fulfill our fundamental and common purpose - to work out our own salvation through helping to save others. Our congregation exists to serve the great commission that Christ gave to his apostles. 'Hidden away', as we have been for over two years now, it has been very difficult. We have, though, praise God, held together as a community which has been our priority. Now, we need to expand our mission and this building will certainly help us do that, provided we all see this as a vocation laid upon each one of us.

Like the children of Israel of old, we might imagine ourselves as having been in *Babylonish captivity* but St. Edmund's is far from Babylon! So with very many thanks to Fr. Marcus and his congregation and all their understanding, pray that we shall soon return to a place of our own.

Fr. Chrysostom

SERVICES

AUGUST

1st 10th Sunday after Pentecost
Beginning of Dormition Fast

No service today.

Fr. Chrysostom at the Swanwick Conference. NB Services might alter in August due to possible holiday arrangements

6th Fri The Transfiguration
[service: to be announced]

8th 11th Sunday after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.00am

15th The Dormition 12th Sunday
after Pentecost Divine Liturgy
11.00am

22nd 13th Sunday after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.00am

29th Beheading of St. John the
Baptist 14th Sunday after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.00am

SEPTEMBER

1st Start of Church Year

5TH 15th Sunday after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.00am

8th Nativity of the Theotokos

12TH 16th Sunday after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.00am

14th Exaltation of the Holy Cross

19th 17th Sunday after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.00am

26th 18th Sunday after Pentecost
Divine Liturgy 11.00am

