

18/12/2023

75th Anniversary of the Orthodox Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God, Bristol



On the 11th of December, 1948, Archbishop Sawa (Sowietow) of Grodno visited Bristol's Anglican Cathedral. There, he presided at Vespers in the cathedral's Norman Chapter House, where he also celebrated the Divine Liturgy the following morning. Afterwards, a general meeting established the Orthodox Church of the Nativity of the Mother of God, Bristol, under the auspices of the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Exile.

Canonically, this operated with the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch through the Archdiocese of Thyateira. Although some parishes later chose to join other jurisdictions, the community in Bristol has been in the Archdiocese since its foundation, making it both the oldest Orthodox church and the oldest of the Archdiocese's communities in the city. To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the parish's foundation and acknowledge the historic link with the Orthodox Church of

the Nativity of the Mother of God, the Dean and Chapter kindly gave permission for a Moleben of Thanksgiving and reception to be held in the Cathedral on the 12th of December, 2023.

The Moleben – a short intercessory service in the Russian tradition – was celebrated by Archimandrite Kyril Jenner, parish priest, with a congregation of local Orthodox Christians and invited guests. Among those present were the Rev.

Protopresbyter Anastasios Salapatas (representing the Archbishop of Thyateira) and the Rev. Protopresbyter George Nicolaou, both of the Greek Orthodox Church of Ss Peter and Paul, Bristol; the Rev. Oeconomos Richard Penwell and a delegation from the Church of St John of Kronstadt in Bath; the Rev. Presbyter Gerald Theodore Hopkins, Fr Richard McKay, a Roman Catholic priest representing the Bishop of Clifton; and the Dean and Vice-Dean of the Cathedral. The Dean, the V. Rev Dr Mandy Ford, offered a brief welcome speech. The parish choir (dir.: Anthony Hearn), joined by choristers from the Lord Mayor's Chapel, sang the Moleben to music of the Russian tradition, including special festive arrangements by Reader Anthony Hearn and Reader Botolph Beavis.

Following the Moleben, Archimandrite Kyril gave a talk on the history of the parish and its founders.

The 12th of December being also Archimandrite Kyril's birthday, the choir sang 'Many Years' for him using his own harmonisation of a Znamenny melody, after which the choir, clergy and congregation went to a reception in the Chapter House. The reception proved an opportunity for local Orthodox Christians and guests to meet in the spirit of fellowship. With the reception in the Chapter House, the parish has come full circle, celebrating its 75 th anniversary in the place of its foundation. May God, who has blessed this community to witness to the Christian faith in Bristol 75 years, grant it in his mercy to continue, at the prayers of the Mother of God and all the saints.

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