

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Moscow

Pilgrim Project 2025

A message from the chaplain:



I am delighted to inform you that St. Andrew's Church, in partnership with the Russian Orthodox Church, has initiated a Religious Literacy programme for members of local parishes from the Diocese of Delhi in the Church of North India and from St. Mark's Cathedral in the Diocese of Central Karnataka in the Church of South India. We have called it Pilgrim Project 2025; it starts on 23rd June and concludes on 3rd July.

The main aim and purpose of organising this trip is to build religious understanding about the different Church traditions beyond India.

The participants in this Pilgrim Project are expected to learn and engage with Christian spirituality in Anglican and Orthodox churches in both Moscow and St Petersburg. They will have opportunities to interact informally with the members and the leaders of St. Andrew's Church both during and after church services and more informally at social gatherings in the parish.

As part of their pilgrimage, participants will be visiting different churches and historic sites to appreciate sign, symbol, colour and icons in both the Russian Orthodox and Anglican Church traditions in Russia.

I hope you will find this newsletter informative and inspiring, as the whole project has been for us. I am grateful to Nicolette Kirk for her assistance in producing it.

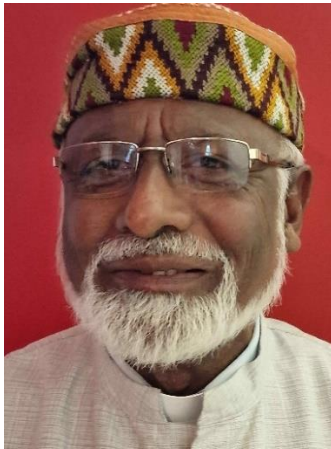
Rev Canon Dr Arun John



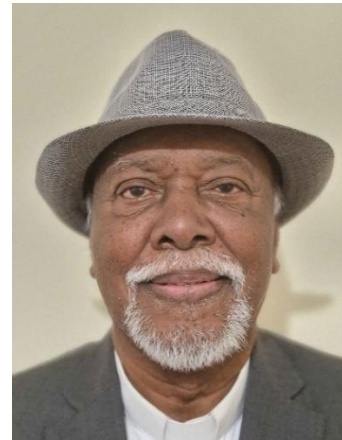
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Our pilgrims:



Rev Dr Thomas Ninan – is a theologian, teacher and spiritualist. He taught religion at the Orthodox seminary in Nagpur and facilitated practical work at the Mar Thoma seminary, Faridabad. Presently, he is associated as a pastor with St. Mark's Cathedral Bangalore.



Rev Dr Clement Rajakumar – was ordained in the Diocese of Delhi and worked for many years at St. Stephens College as Chaplain and Vice Principal. He is a vocational Counsellor and associate member of the Brotherhood of Ascended Christ in Delhi. He currently assists as part of the pastoral team of St. Mark's Cathedral Bangalore.



Sunil Ronald Sannoo – has a background in operations, supply chain management, business development and sales. He worked with Nestle in India, Switzerland and South Asia. He was the Secretary of Church of the Epiphany, Gurgaon and is actively involved at Diocese of Delhi, producing their newsletter.



Mrs Neera Sannoo is an educator, currently the manager of the Diocese of Delhi's St. Crispin's School, Gurgaon. She supports the staff, sharing her skills in an advisory capacity on school administration and recruitment.



St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Moscow Pilgrim Project 2025

Worship and fellowship at St. Andrew's Moscow



An evening reception at the Chaplain's house in honour of the pilgrims. A select number of visitors were invited from the local Russian business community and diplomats from Ghana, Kenya, India and the UK.



Church members arranged the food and this wonderful celebration, engaging with the pilgrims and the local community.



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Tour of the history of St. Andrew's with churchwarden Pat Szymczak



Visiting the "Lavochka", St. Andrew's second-hand clothes shop, and the storage facilities for gifts to other charitable causes, with churchwarden Nicolette Kirk.



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← Farewell presentation to the pilgrims of travelling icons, as a souvenir of their visit to Russia.

Supper, hosted by the church playgroup.



CHRIST THE SAVIOUR CATHEDRAL, MOSCOW



The pilgrims were particularly moved to learn about the history of pain when this Cathedral was demolished by the Soviet authorities, and the ultimate joy in its rebuilding and restoration to its former glory and its consecration in 2000.



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MOSCOW KREMLIN AND RED SQUARE



The Kremlin Cathedrals



The pilgrims were able to visit this famous historical and political landmark. Entering the cathedrals and other historic monuments within the walls of Kremlin and on Red Square helped them to realise the rich edifice of Russian art, architecture and spirituality.

The most famous of Moscow landmarks - St. Basil's on Red Square (properly known as the Cathedral of the Veil of the Blessed Virgin Mary)



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MARY AND MARTHA CONVENT, MOSCOW (MARFO-MARIINSKY CONVENT)



The pilgrims were delighted to meet the nuns and learn about their work relating to hospital, orphanage and ongoing support for the poor and needy through their daily feeding schemes. A guided tour from one of the sisters in their administration was inspiring.

THE HOLY TRINITY LAVRA, SERGIEV POSAD



The Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius is a world-famous spiritual centre of the Russian Orthodox Church and a popular site of pilgrimage and tourism. It comprises a unique ensemble of more than 50 buildings and edifices established at different dates over the centuries.



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ST. TATIANA'S CHURCH – MOSCOW STATE UNIVERSITY



Deacon Alexander Cherepenin



A wonderful evening with Fr. Vladimir, the senior priest, and visiting Ethiopian Orthodox pilgrims. It was a remarkable opportunity to share the history of churches from India and Ethiopia and Russia.



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ST. PETERSBURG

The pilgrims met with our sister Anglican congregation in St. Petersburg, who hold their services at the Lutheran Cathedral of St. Peter on Nevsky Prospekt.



Visiting with Archbishop Vladimir Provorov of the Lutheran Church, who met the pilgrims and introduced them to Lutheran Church history and its ministry in Russia.



Outside St. Isaac's Cathedral.

The churchwarden of the Anglican Church in St. Petersburg, Maria Karyakina, and Annes Nel, a clergyman from Ireland and a lecturer in the theological department at St. Petersburg University were a huge support in guiding the pilgrims' tour of St. Petersburg.



The Alexander Nevsky Trinity Lavra.



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A message from Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov)

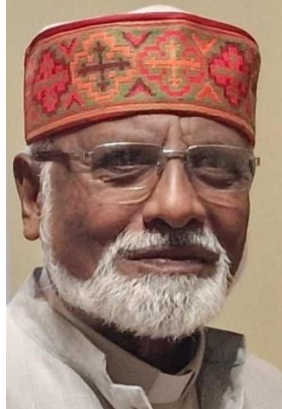


On behalf of the Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, it has been a pleasure to welcome the group of clergy and laity from the Church of North India and the Church of South India who visited Russia from June 21 to July 4, 2025. We were very pleased to have the opportunity to meet our Indian brothers and sister, share fraternal fellowship with them and tell them about the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as the history and culture of Russia. The friendship between Russia and India, the strong ties that unite our peoples, are a reliable foundation for building our inter-church cooperation. I am convinced that we will be able to develop relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Churches of North India and South India. I hope that we will have the opportunity to participate together in many new joint projects.



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Final reflections:



Rev Dr Thomas Ninan: This was a spiritual encounter with Russian Culture and Anglican and Russian Orthodox Spirituality. The iconography in the churches and its institutions told a history of pain and joy, aspects of the Orthodox family of Christianity in Russia. The place of saints and martyrs became more beautiful from our visit to the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, Moscow.

At St. Petersburg, the phases of Church and society explained the role of religion in public life as “sacred” in a differently organised society. The food and customs were also another learning experience.

My thanks to St. Andrew's Church, Moscow and especially the Rev Dr Canon Arun John and his team and Danil Arakelian, from Russian Orthodox Department of External Church Relations.



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Rev Dr Clement Rajakumar: I came with heavy winter clothes, fearing the weather. But God gave us wonderful climate conditions all through our travel. In India the three wheelers (scooter transport) cycle riksha, and town buses are the prevailing modes of transport in crowded cities. However, in Russia it was a different experience where driving lanes were duly marked and followed, Zebra crossings strictly adhered to and disciplined traffic management with underground road crossings. The Metro and Railways are quite advanced - no wonder Russian technology is considered to be superior.

I found the churches quite big with beautiful icons and architecture. Different biblical references with inscriptions and icons of saints reflect the deep commitment of Russian Orthodox and Anglicans towards their Christian faith. The ministry of the Church (both Russian Orthodox and Anglican) has a special heart for the poor and needy, and their charity work is exemplary. The Church has a huge presence of young people.

We have witnessed a diverse Christian community from the global South and the African continent with a few western Christians at St. Andrew's Church, our host community. We had a wonderful worship experience. This initiative of St. Andrew's Church under the leadership of Rev Dr Canon Arun John in collaboration with the Russian Orthodox Church is a remarkable initiative. This will enable Churches from different continents to affirm that the whole is in the hands of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rev Dr Canon Arun John and Danil Arakelian for being wonderful host and guide during this pilgrim trip.



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Sunil Ronald Sannoo: The pilgrimage to Russia - Moscow and St. Petersburg - has truly been an epiphanic journey. Beyond the ostensible opaqueness is the world of Alice in Wonderland in an unexpected discovery of its so many monuments and rich culture. There is so much more to Russia than the iconic picture postcard images of Red Square and St. Basil's Cathedral. We have been happily surprised by the depth and extent to which Christianity is prevalent in this country.

The resurgence of Christianity along with the upkeep of churches e.g. the huge effort in restoring St. Andrew's Church in Moscow and the Anglican Church in St. Petersburg has been commendable. The depth, attached meaning, significance and attention to detail of the omnipresent Russian Orthodox churches has been so insightful and amazing. The iconography, liturgical practices and strong affinity to its martyrs and history for divine guidance is so appreciable. The awe-inspiring visit to the two lavras, many of the cathedrals and churches has been extremely insightful. The fact that official representatives and priests have taken us through these guided tours has added to a rich understanding. A one-on-one meeting with the Archbishop of the Lutheran Church demonstrates to the width of exposure as well.

Of course, the icing on the cake is that the pilgrimage has been meticulously planned and organised. It ensured that we got a complete feel of the place by visiting all places of interest, key people and even savouring the local cuisine. The outpouring of affection and care has won our hearts, reignited our faith and created a bond with all who have been involved and each person we met. Our grateful thanks to Rev. Canon Dr. Arun John for conceiving and putting it together with St. Andrew's Church and the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. Spasibo.



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Neera Sannoo: We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all our generous sponsors and organisers who made our recent pilgrimage to Moscow and St. Petersburg possible and gave us the opportunity to explore some of the most significant churches and cultural landmarks of Russia.

Among the many places visited was the iconic Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergius, where we were warmly welcomed by church representatives who shared the history of the cathedral's remarkable reconstruction and its role in the contemporary Russian Orthodox Church. We even had the opportunity to attend a moving liturgy which left a lasting impression on us both spiritually and personally.

In St. Petersburg, we were privileged to visit the majestic Saint Isaac's Cathedral and the Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood. Standing beneath their breathtaking domes, we felt a profound sense of connection to centuries of faith and devotion. We also met with several dignitaries and local church leaders who kindly took time to discuss their community initiatives and the challenges and hopes for the future.

Throughout our journey, we received exceptional support and assistance—from help with travel arrangements and accommodation to interpreters who ensured we could fully participate in conversations and ceremonies. The hospitality extended to us everywhere we went made us feel truly welcome and cared for.



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This pilgrimage has been a deeply enriching experience that strengthened our faith, broadened our understanding of the universal Christian community, and inspired us to carry forward the spirit of fellowship and cooperation and ecumenism. We believe that the insights and relationships built during this exchange programme will prove invaluable in the long term, fostering greater cultural understanding and opening doors for future collaboration between our communities.



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The Chaplain and congregation
of St. Andrew's, Moscow
would like to express their thanks
to all who made this pilgrimage possible,
but especially to
**the Department for External Church Relations
of the Moscow Patriarchate,**
and particularly:

Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk

Hieromonk Stefan (Igumnov)

Danil Arakelian

