Journey Continues

From Jerusalem to St. Augustine: Mission Centers & Strategic Plans
The Gospel in the Heart Language of All Nations: A Vision for the Future
The OCMC’s Mission magazine is published twice a year as a resource to educate and engage people in Orthodox missions.

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OCMC’s Vision is that all people may come to know the saving love of our Lord: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And it’s Mission is to partner with the worldwide Orthodox Church to bring people into vibrant, self-supporting Eucharistic communities.

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The old shaman listened intently to the request: “We would like to bring Orthodox Christianity to this village. Would you be interested?” With a gleam in his eye he responded: “Yes, I can feel that what you have is good.” “And would you too consider receiving this Faith we have talked about?” “Yes,” Salale replied, after having received a personal vision from God that the visitors were waiting for him in his village and knowing that a dry riverbed in a time of drought had filled overnight with water before the missionaries arrived. “I know that what you are bringing is from Akuj (God).”

What does one do, after meeting a shaman in a miraculous encounter where God’s power has been revealed and an invitation to consider Christianity is given? As Fr. Zachariah and I left the Shaman’s village of Nakabosan together with the OCMC Mission Team, we were elated and feeling the presence of the Holy Spirit, while at the same time we were awed at the gravity of what was still ahead.

Throughout the next twelve months, Dan-
iel, a young man from the neighboring village who was being trained as a catechist, made weekly trips to Nakabosan preaching and teaching. Fr. Zachariah also visited, answering questions, meeting with people, and nurturing those who were considering the Gospel message. Some progress was being made, in a slow and gradual process to share Christ with the people of Nakabosan, some of whom were hearing the Gospel message for the very first time.

Another OCMC Mission Team visited the Turkana in March of 2011. This time a group of seminarians from Holy Cross Seminary in Boston, together with Bishop Savas of Troas (now a board member of OCMC and liaison to the newly formed Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America), traveled to Nakabosan. After worshipping in the priest and catechist’s village and baptizing 130 people who had come to Faith, the Team hiked across the dry riverbed and over the hot desert interior to where the village of Nakabosan awaited its visitors. An entire Spirit-filled day of teaching through Biblical skits, preaching from the Gospel, praying, singing, and dancing together in fellowship ensued.

Near the conclusion of the day, I sat together with Salale, Fr. Zachariah, and my son Stephanos, under the shade of an Acacia tree reviewing the events of the day. Salale revealed more of the story of how God had told him about the white people that would come to him with this message, and he pleaded that we would not leave him without teaching him these ways. I smiled within, marveling at how the Lord was working in all of us in this process, because we were about to present him with a resource that could enable him to continue to lead his people, but now in the ways of Christianity. Prior to the trip, thanks to a generous gift, we purchased a solar powered MP3 player that contained the entire Gospel translated into the Turkana language. I explained to Salale that first of all, the Church was fully present in the nearby community and its leaders, Fr. Zachariah and Daniel the catechist. But then, I talked further of the Scriptures and how they contained the message that he must share with his people, and finally I showed him the MP3 player that he could listen to and discuss with Fr. Zachariah and Daniel. He held the player in his long and strong fingers, turning it over and marveling, as much as we were, at the technologies that made such things possible. After discussing a little more and explaining how to use the device, we returned to the dancing and festivities with the Team and villagers.
Our time to leave and hike back to our camp arrived, but not without another surprise by the Lord. After about an hour of winding our way through the desert, Fr. Vladimir (the priest from the main center in Lodwar) came running back to us through the trees, a little out of breath and with a look of concern in his eyes. “Hurry, hurry,” he said. “The river filled while we were teaching in the village and the waters are still climbing! If we don’t get across immediately we could be trapped or swept away as we cross!” Fortunately, the waters never rose to that level and the Team passed safely, once again with confirmation to all in the region, and to us as well, that the Lord was blessing this visit and was the author of all that had transpired.

Fr. Zachariah and Daniel were greatly encouraged. After the departure of the Team, the enthusiasm in the village remained. Salale continued to listen to the Gospel, to ask questions and even began teaching others about what he was learning. Daniel had organized the youth, men, and women and was offering regular lessons and prayer, together with Fr. Zachariah who visited the area frequently. Then, some months later, Fr. Zachariah was contacted by Fr. Vladimir from Lodwar. “Fr. Zachariah, Fr. Martin just called me and said that he would like to visit us again in July to record some of what has happened in the village and what had gone on since our last visit. He had some deep and thoughtful questions. I didn’t quite understand the nuances from the translation and thought that maybe his questions indicated a hesitancy over Baptism. When I asked, “Are you sure, Salale, that you want to be baptized?” he adamantly answered: “If I didn’t want to be baptized, you would not be sitting here now and I would not have accepted the picture you brought me or this device that plays the message of God. I don’t know about the rest of the village. That is up to them, but I will be baptized.”

The water was a murky brown as it carried fresh mud in rippling patterns along the newly flowing river. A dog tried unsuccessfully to cross the flow and reach its owners, before it finally turned around and was swept to safety downstream on the opposite bank. Many people had gathered along the river and were preparing themselves as the prayers continued: “Therefore, O King who loveth mankind, come now through the descent of your Holy Spirit and sanctify this water.” The flow was swift, and I braced myself against the current, searching to find an eddy where those who were being anointed by the local clergy could approach safely for Baptism. It was time, and as I looked up from the dizzying water flowing around my cassock I found myself face to face with Salale. He stood proudly, but equally with a humbleness and silent expectation in his eyes waiting for this moment. Behind him, winding through the water and leading back to the riverbank and beyond was a line of people ready to be immersed with him in the waters of redemption. A moment of understanding passed between our eyes and I asked if he was ready. The shaman bowed his head, “The servant of God is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Together with Salale, 110 people were baptized, and Orthodox Christianity was planted in the village of Nakabosan that morning.

As is recorded in the pages of Scripture from Apostolic times and is repeated throughout the centuries to this day, the Gospel is spread to new places with signs and wonders. The Lord sends His messengers and makes His presence known throughout the world, that all may come to know His love and grace. Having a dual mission of both ministering and recording these events in Turkana allowed us to hear numerous accounts from those who were baptized, or had recently come to Christ, on what had brought them to the Church and
what had changed in their lives. Repeated instances of miraculous healings, of miracles such as the river filling on each of the OCMC Team visits, and of a newfound peace in people’s lives and with their neighbors were the common themes that ran from interview to interview.

Another thing that was mentioned in the interviews enforces and offers guidance for what must still be done. One Turkana man was asked how he first heard the Gospel, and he explained that his first exposure to the message came when he saw a group of white people (the second OCMC Turkana Team) gathered with a group of villagers under a tree while he was tending his herd. He approached and was moved by the teaching and continued to come and learn from the local catechist and priest after the Team left. Since then, his life had been transformed.

What now must happen in Turkana? There are still many people in the region who have not heard the Gospel presented in such a way that they can understand its implications or would consider offering their lives to Christ. As St. Paul has said: “How shall they hear without a preacher?” Those who accept this call to preach the Gospel are a necessary part in the fulfillment of Christ’s last words before His Ascension to “Go and make disciples of all nations.” Having the means and structure to send those people is equally important. A request has come from Turkana that a local mission center be established where a team of missionaries will work together with the local clergy and leaders to train the catechists, prepare students to be sent to the seminary in Nairobi, and to help establish the ministries of a locally vibrant church that can reach out to the surrounding regions where many are ready to respond, IF there would be someone to preach the Word and establish the Church.

This is the challenge and the opportunity that is being given to OCMC and the Orthodox Church in America, that through the grace of God, we might participate in His mission not only for Turkana but for so many places throughout the world: sharing Christ, bringing people to Him, establishing His Church, and sharing His love. The journey continues.

**ABOVE:** In the summer of 2011, OCMC Executive Director Fr. Martin Ritsi baptized Salale. This moment was the culmination of a year-long journey that saw Salale and many from his village of Nakabosan brought to the faith through regular catechism and the power of the Holy Spirit. Their journey in the Faith now continues as members of the Body of Christ.

**TOP:** Fr. Zachariah (left) blesses Salale (right) with Holy Chrism following his baptism this past summer. OCMC is striving to reach more people like Salale around the world who may have never before heard the Gospel message of Christ.

**ABOVE:** Salale partakes of the Body and Blood of Christ. Over 100 people joined Salale as they received the Eucharist for the first time as well. This gift of communion with Christ is what the faithful of North America have the opportunity to share through the ministries of OCMC.
The Gospel in the Heart Language of All Nations: A Vision for the Future

by: Dr. Michael Colburn

The Heart is More Easily Penetrated When the Gospel is Heard in One’s Mother-Tongue

“If your God is so great, why doesn’t He speak my language?” These were the words of a Cakchiquel Indian of Guatemala spoken around 1918 to a young missionary who had offered him the Bible in Spanish, the national language of the country. This challenge so moved William Cameron Townsend that he went to live with the Cakchiquel, learned their language, devised an alphabet, and translated the Scriptures into their language. Seeing how lives were transformed when the Cakchiquel read the Word of God in the ‘language of their heart,’ that is, in their native tongue, Townsend’s passion for the rest of his life was to recruit, train, and send others to repeat the process for the thousands of people groups without the Scriptures in their own language. To do so, he founded the Wycliffe Bible Translators, responsible for more translations of the Scriptures than any other group in history. He had a vision from God, and by God’s grace it was fulfilled.

As a young man, I experienced firsthand the power of communicating the Gospel in people’s ‘heart language.’ Inspired by Cameron Townsend, and called by God, I served as a missionary with the Wycliffe Bible Translators for 13 years, mostly in Papua New Guinea working to translate the New Testament into the Ogea language. The Gospel first came to the Ogea in the late 1800s. But when I went there in 1977, they did not have the Scriptures in their own language, and while claiming to be Christians, they were in fact animists. I went to live with the Ogea after hearing of an Ogea man who longed for the Scriptures in his language. No dictionary or grammar of Ogea existed. The language had no alphabet. It was necessary to learn the language without any aids and to devise an alphabet. After living with them for two years, I finally began translation work.

I will never forget the day when I read a passage from the newly translated Gospel of Mark to a woman named Sigou. This was the first time she had heard the Scriptures in her native language. It touched her, and she committed her life to Christ. A year later she told me an amazing story. The Ogea survive by growing food in their gardens. In Ogea culture, they believe their garden will succeed only if they hire someone who knows the secret name of the spirit who lives in the ground where the garden is. This person knows secret, magical incantations that will bind the spirit to bless the garden. For the first time in their lives, Sigou and her husband, Malai, made a daring decision. Instead of hiring someone to do magic, they prayed to Christ. Their garden produced so...
abundantly they were able to share their food with others whose gardens were depleted. And as they did so, Sigou and Malai told others how they had turned from the power of the spirits to the power of God!

In the years that followed this event, many Ogea turned to Christ, evangelized their own people, and became missionaries themselves, planting churches in surrounding language groups. The Gospel of Mark was published in 1980. After that, I trained Kelebai Iriwai, an Ogea man, to be the translator for his people, and I became the advisor. He went on to complete the first draft of the entire New Testament. Luke and Acts were published in 1995. After his untimely death, other Ogea men continued the work of revising the draft. God willing, the entire New Testament will be printed in 2012.

The Vision of Orthodox Hierarchs for the Translation of Liturgical Texts

From the beginning, the Orthodox Church has provided translations of the Scriptures into local languages. Saints Cyril and Methodius are credited with the first translation into Slavonic. In Orthodox Christian missions, it is not just the Scriptures that need to be translated. The gathering of the Church in Divine Liturgy is central to our life and worship, and provides the context for understanding the Holy Scriptures. Having seen firsthand the impact of the Gospel in the language of the heart, I am convinced of the need for the Service Books to also be in the language of the people.

The translation of not just the Scriptures, but also the Liturgical texts is tied to the history of the Orthodox Church. Examples include Saints Cyril and Methodius and Saint Innocent of Alaska. Recent history in East Africa also provides examples of men with a vision for translation.

Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania, who served 10 years in Kenya, says, "The 'incarnation' of God's Word in the language and customs of a country has been and must be the first concern of all Orthodox mission."1

While serving as acting Archbishop of Kenya, His Eminence facilitated the translation of the Liturgy into a number of languages. His successor, Archbishop Makarios (Tillyrides) has also labored to provide the Divine Liturgy and other services in the languages of Kenya. In his writings about the need for translation, Archbishop Makarios points to the story of Cameron Townsend and the Wycliffe Bible Translators.2 Such stories are of interest to overseas hierarchs because of their desire to assist local Orthodox priests and lay people who long for the Orthodox service books in their heart language. Translators need a variety of resources for their work.

The Abundance of Resources for Bible Translation and their Shortage for Liturgical Translation

During the past 100 years, many resources have been developed to assist translators. However, there appears to be a tremendous gap between the resources available for mother-tongue translators of the Bible and those available for translators of Liturgical texts.

What resources are available for a mother-tongue translator of the Scriptures?

ABOVE: Though many hierarchs are themselves eager and supportive of translation efforts, the resources available for this work are very limited. The people and tools necessary for translating the Scriptures and services of the Church into the language of the people they serve will be needed going into the future.

ABOVE: In Orthodox Christian missions, it is not just the Scriptures that need to be translated. The gathering of the Church in Divine Liturgy and other services is central to our life and worship and provides the context for understanding the Holy Scriptures.

An aspiring national translator has available the assistance of many Protestant organizations that specialize in Bible translation. From them, this translator can receive training in the theory and practice of translation from experienced missionaries with qualifications in linguistics, translation, and Biblical studies. In many cases, a national translator will have a missionary-translator assigned to work with him either full-time or part-time for ongoing training, advice, and support. Others are available to check the translation and assist in preparing it for publication. In many countries, regional Bible translation centers exist where the national translator has access to additional training, computers, and support staff.
The national Bible translator has available many software tools. For example, Paratext, a word processor with specialized features for Bible translation, can check for missing verses and punctuation issues. It displays side-by-side the original text, his translation, and translations from other languages in windows that scroll together. With it, he can easily generate and view wordlists with frequency counts and concordances. When he clicks on a line in the concordance, the software will jump to that position in his translation and scroll all the windows to the same verse.

When a translator working in a remote village is struggling with a translation issue, often he or she has no access to a phone or email to get help. But, he or she has available hundreds of written translation resources, including translation-oriented exegetical commentaries, consultants’ notes from checking other translations, checklists, and sets of standardized questions to use when testing a translation. These are all available as a digital library. Computer-based translation tools provide non-experts access to expert knowledge.

What resources are available for a mother-tongue translator of the Orthodox Liturgical books? The national who wants the service books in his or her language faces a great challenge. Although many hierarchs are themselves eager and supportive of translation efforts, the resources available are very limited.

In the Orthodox Church, there is presently no corresponding global entity to the Wycliffe Bible Translators for translating Orthodox Liturgical books. Thus, for the priest or layperson wishing to translate the Orthodox service books into his mother-tongue, there are no existing translation tools. But this is not the best way. The task is enormous even for one language—and there are thousands of languages without the Liturgical texts. The task could be accomplished more quickly, efficiently, and accurately with resources similar to those available for Bible translation, but aimed at Liturgical translation.

Is this an impossible vision? If it is from God, and if we labor together through His grace, in faith, love, humility, and obedience, it can be achieved, even if it takes years. There is a saying that we should, “Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God.” Will you be part of these great things?

Meet the Colburns

By God’s grace, Dr. Michael Colburn and his wife, Lisa, with their son, Liam, are willing to commit the rest of their lives to the fulfillment of the vision outlined in this article through teaching, training, and mentoring OCMC missionaries and translators. Dr. Michael also hopes to develop liturgical translation references and computer based tools for OCMC. For 13 years, he was a missionary linguist and translator with the Wycliffe Bible Translators, serving the Ogea people of Papua New Guinea. Since leaving Wycliffe, he has worked 22 years part-time as an advisor to the Ogea New Testament translation project, and full-time as a software developer. For the last six years of this time, he has managed a software development division within the U.S. government. He holds a certification in project management from the Project Management Institute, a senior certification in multi-million dollar program management by the Federal Acquisition Institute, and has led numerous initiatives from initial vision through to implementation. His academic qualifications include a BA in Biblical Studies, MA in Linguistics, MCIS in Software Engineering, and a PhD in Computer Science. Science degree.

He has developed courses and taught both within industry and at the college level. Dr. Colburn has served as an OCMC Mission Specialist in linguistics by providing training in language learning to new OCMC missionaries. Michael and his wife, Lisa, have now been received as long-term missionary candidates. In preparation for liturgical translation, he hopes to learn about the best practices and issues in the translation of the Liturgical texts from experienced professors, clergy, and laity, and develop a course in liturgical translation.

God willing, in 2013 he plans to attend the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, specializing in liturgical theology and liturgical Greek. Lisa will also assist him in the ministry of liturgical translation. They hope to work full-time in Kenya starting in 2015. Under the direction of His Eminence, Archbishop Makarios, Michael and Lisa would like to establish a translation program in Kenya which, God willing, could become a model for establishing such programs in other countries where OCMC works.

Historical Mission Centers

Over the centuries, the Church has been blessed with many mission centers that have trained and sent highly faithful missionaries throughout the world. In each case, there was a strategic plan that needed to be formulated and implemented in an effort to cooperate with the guidance and leadership of the Holy Spirit. In our own time, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) has continued this tradition by training and sending missionaries throughout the world.

Since the Day of Pentecost, Jerusalem was the mother church and mission center of the Church that was established and expanded by our Triune God. The apostles gathered in the home of Mark the evangelist for worship, prayer, and fellowship. The Holy Spirit empowered the earthly Church in the presence of the apostles and many others. In the Book of Acts (9: 26-28), we find Barnabas bringing Paul to the apostles in Jerusalem so that the former enemy of Christianity can be reconciled with the leaders of the Church. Moreover, in Acts 11: 22, the apostles send Barnabas from Jerusalem to Antioch when they learn that Gentiles are being converted to the Faith.

St. Paul understood Jerusalem to be his missionary base as evidenced by the food that he collected on behalf of the beleaguered faithful living in Jerusalem, and by the fact that he returned to Jerusalem after his first three missionary voyages. St. Paul’s straightforward strategic plan had the overarching goal of converting as many people to Christianity as possible before the imminent second coming of Christ. His belief in an imminent Parousia instilled a sense of urgency into his missionary plans. St. Paul also wrote about eventually traveling beyond Rome to Spain in an effort to establish the Church in those regions as well.

His strategy for accomplishing the overarching goal was practical and consistently applied. He would establish church communities in the larger cities of the Roman Empire and along the trade routes. He would stay for extended periods of time so that local leaders and clergy could be trained and ordained. They would then be responsible for the spiritual oversight of the locals, and they would also be expected to plant the Faith in the outlying areas of that region. St. Paul would then move on to a new mission field, but he was sure to follow up by sending letters and/or trusted assistants back to these communities. In the case of Ephesus, for instance, he himself was able to travel back and meet with the church leadership in order to provide instruction and exhortation.

The Apostle’s vast knowledge of the society of his times enabled him to employ various strategies in an effort to make the faith more meaningful and comprehensible to people of other religions. He employed concepts such as ‘redemption’ to the slaves, ‘justification’ to the legal community, ‘adoption in Christ’ to the orphans, ‘sanctification’ to those associated with mystery cults, and Platonic and Stoic principles to the philosophers of the period. Moreover, athletic terminology and farming imagery resonated with other sectors of society. In short, St. Paul had a strategic plan that contained an overarching mission and strategies for achieving his ultimate goal.

By the year 70 A.D., the Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans, St. James had been executed, and the other apostles had either been martyred or scattered to locations outside Jerusalem. Thankfully, the successors to the apostles had the inspiration and courage to establish new mission centers in cities such as Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, and Rome. For instance, John the Evangelist remained active in and around Ephesus until the end of the first century. The Church in Ephesus provided oversight and missionary direction to neighboring communities.

The Church of Sts. Peter and Paul in Antioch when they learn that Gentiles are being converted to the Faith.

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In the early 4th century, St. Athanasios in his capacity as Patriarch of Alexandria ordained Frumentius to the episcopacy and then sent
RIGHT: Freshly anointed and newly baptized, this African boy represents the growing Orthodox Christian family. Mission centers can emerge among new Christian communities allowing the faithful to spread the Gospel to the most remote parts of the world.

ABOVE: As OCMC partners with the indigenous churches to help bring unreached people to Christ and develop vibrant Eucharistic communities, ministry plans will be developed that outline the needs of a given community and the resources needed to meet those needs. Community service projects like the well seen here can be vital aspects of ministry plans. RIGHT: Providing a holistic witness to the faith that includes healthcare is a central component to OCMC’s new strategic plan and methodology for sharing Christ with the world. Here, team member Susan Nelson cares for an ailing child in Uganda.
him to Ethiopia as a missionary. The overarching missionary goal was to convert the King of Axum so that others would convert more readily to Christianity.

By the 9th century, Constantinople had become a prominent mission center. Patriarch Photios was inspired to send the brothers Cyril and Methodios to Moravia as missionaries. In this case, a key component of the missionary strategy involved creating a written language for the people so that scriptural and liturgical texts could be provided in the Slavonic language. This common sense approach was quite controversial at the time, since many believed that only Greek, Latin, and Hebrew should be utilized as ecclesiastical languages. Nonetheless, this strategy, combined with the extensive training of indigenous leaders, proved to be very successful even after the collapse of the Moravian mission. The new leadership was now equipped to spread the Faith to various regions in Slavic lands.

**Recent Mission Centers**

Nearly one thousand years later, Moscow became a powerful mission center under the leadership of Metropolitan Innocent of Moscow. His extensive missionary experience in Alaska inspired him to establish a Missionary Society. The overarching goal was, “to advance the conversion of those who do not yet believe in Christ our Savior.” The primary methods for accomplishing this goal were prayer, mission education, and financial support for new missionaries. Within a short period of time, seventeen other dioceses had representatives associated with the Missionary Society.

In 1961, Anastasios Yannoulatos, now Archbishop of Albania, assumed the leadership of the Inter-Orthodox Missionary Center in Athens. The name of the Center, Porefthendes, expresses the overarching goal of going forth to all nations as missionaries. Over the years, Porefthendes has ignited the missionary flame of the Church of Greece by providing scholarly publications, training missionaries, and providing missionary awareness to the faithful. This modern-day mission center has labored to expand the Faith throughout Africa, in South Korea, Albania, and in other parts of the world.

**Orthodox Christian Mission Center**

Since the late 1980s, our mission center here in the United States has sent dozens of missionaries to Albania, Romania, Tanzania, Kenya, and other parts of the world. In addition, hundreds of faithful have served on short-term teams to numerous countries around the globe. Many of these missionary efforts have been supported by generous financial contributions that have been used to provide catechetical materials, health care, church buildings, schools, clinics, seminars, drinking wells, and other necessities.

Since 1994 when our Orthodox Christian Mission Center was officially established by SCOBA, there has been lots of progress in the overall coordination of all these efforts. A new mission center has been constructed and is staffed by professionals who have extensive expertise in mission. The Pan-Orthodox character of OCMC has provided a tremendous boost in terms of personnel and other resources that can be utilized for the Glory of God and the promotion of the Gospel.

**Our New Strategic Plan**

All of this growth and progress has necessitated the development of strategic plans. Just as the churches in Jerusalem, Alexandria, Constantinople, Moscow, and Greece needed strategic plans, we too need to refine our goals and methodologies. Here at OCMC, we are in the process of formulating a new strategic plan for the upcoming years. Some of the goals and objectives are presented below in a kind of preview manner.

**Moral and Practical Support of the Church**

We hope to engage all sectors of the Church (hierarchy, priests, laity) in an effort to secure and sustain the moral and temporal support of the Church for OCMC. As we try to “make disciples of the Church,” we hope to engage the faithful as advocates, missionaries, and donors. Our overarching macro-goal is “Bringing people to Christ.” We want to partner with the indigenous churches so that we can help to bring unreached people to Christ. This outreach and cultivation will require the development of vibrant, Eucharistic communities in the mission fields. Methodologies employed include: sending missionaries and teams, Support a Mission Priest (SAMP), community service and medical ministries, theological education, and translations. Ministry plans will be drafted for each mission field so that goals and objectives can be clearly outlined, monitored, and evaluated. An important component of the ministry plans pertains to exit strategies. We need to know when to leave a particular region, and this needs to be done in a responsible manner so that the indigenous church can perpetuate the growth that has already been realized. We also value our highly-trained staff and we want to ensure that each member of the OCMC team is nurtured and respected. Staff wellness programs are being planned for the future. It is important that we remain results-oriented in our approach. While it is important to monitor and report on dollars spent and on the number of people employed for a specific mission, it is even more important to report on the results. For instance, how many people have been baptized, and what kinds of new ministries have been spawned as a result of our efforts. Ultimately, it is our prayer that the churches in the mission fields we serve will grow to such a degree that they will establish their own mission centers. Jerusalem, Constantinople, Moscow, Athens, and St. Augustine have developed vibrant mission centers in various times and places. We believe that we have a fundamental responsibility to inspire the church communities of today to do the same. The church in Tanzania, for instance, is growing rapidly and has fostered a strong mission spirit. We do not want churches overseas to feel dependent on us, but rather to grow from our temporary assistance in such a way that they will feel empowered to serve themselves and reach out to others in a dynamic manner.

Certainly the Holy Spirit has empowered our Church since Apostolic times in Jerusalem. Many new mission centers have been established since the first center was inaugurated on the Day of Pentecost. Our young mission center in St. Augustine is certainly one of those God-inspired centers. I pray that all of us will labor together and with God as we strive to build up our OCMC so that new centers can be established in older established churches and in some of the new mission fields that are now being cultivated.
2011 has been an interesting and challenging year as Anastasia continues to serve His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios at the Archdiocese in a variety of ways. She has found teaching Christian Education and overseeing the fieldwork assignments at the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy very fulfilling, and has been able to apply her theological education from Holy Cross to this aspect of her work. She also offers campus ministry Bible studies in her home, and conducts seminars and retreats for teacher training. This summer, she worked with Dn. Anastas Bendo on the final edits and translation of Dee Pennock’s book, Who is God? Who Am I? Who are you? The next step of this translation project will be to contextualize and translate the teachers’ manual for use by youth leaders and catechists.

Many, many thanks to all the people who donated to her Amazon Wish List, and also to Fr. Luke Veronis, and Panayiotis and Shannon Sakellarioiu for delivering so many wonderful resources to Albania. The newly renovated classroom and Resource Center were made available in July to the OCMC Mission Team Family Camp’s youngest children who enjoyed the space for their lessons, and the new toys. The seminary students will conduct four day-camps in September just before the start-up of the Catechism programs, and so much of the materials for these programs were provided by the generosity of prayer partners.

Anastasia hopes to recommit for a third term of service to Albania next year and is beginning to plan her speaking tour in America. The dates have not been set as yet, but will most likely be during Great Lent. If your community is interested in having Anastasia visit, speak, or conduct a mission retreat, please contact her through OCMC to coordinate speaking dates.

In May, Georgia Bendo completed another year at Protagonists School as an English teacher and catechist. During 2011, the program has been bolstered with generous funds from a grant by the Farah Foundation. Georgia’s after school catechism club completed the first of a two book catechism series written by His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios. She created an accompanying activity book with small paper crafts for each lesson. The children also enjoyed a Christmas Party, a Vasilopita (St. Basil’s Cake) party at New Year’s, and a Lenten project. The week after Easter they went on a field trip to the 13th century Ardenica monastery. They were impressed by this historic landmark with its centuries-old houses and vineyards.
old iconography, and then enjoyed a picnic on the grounds.

Georgia spent the summer visiting and speaking at several churches in America. She is thankful for the support and prayers of the many she met on her way.

Georgia, with her husband, Deacon Anastasios and their son, Vasilı, joyfully announce the birth of their second child, Evdokia Lindsay Bendo, born 7 August 2011. Please keep their growing family in your prayers.

THE HOPPE FAMILY

Come Follow Me, One Family in Christ, Joy—these are the themes of the three major camp activities that the Hoppes ran this summer. The first was of a camp for boys 10 to 12 years old which took place at the monastery of the Dormition on an island near the village of Zverne. Approximately 75 campers and 20 staff participated in the camp. This was the first year Nathan has been asked to direct this camp. One week after the conclusion of the boys camp, twelve OCMC short-term volunteers arrived to assist with the first family camp ever held in the Orthodox Church of Albania. Seventeen Albanian families participated. The program included seminars for adults on marriage and parenting, special activities for children and the whole family, two afternoons at the beach and other excursions. It was enthusiastically received by the Albanian families who requested that the camp be held again next year.

On August 10th, the Hoppes met with a staff of 25 Albanian volunteers to make final preparations for the children’s day camps they lead in Kosovo each summer. These were held in Kosovo from August 13 to September 1. Camps were held in four villages with the participation of approximately 1400 children. These camps are part of the philanthropic and social work of the Orthodox Church of Albania and are generously supported by a grant from the Agape Canister program. The theme this year was “Joy”. The fun-filled program was designed to teach personal, social and citizenship skills which will help the children to find true joy in their lives.

MOLDOVA

CHRISTINA SEMON

Christina has been getting to know ‘up close’ how tough life is for the youth in Moldova. A quarter of its population has left the country to seek work abroad. Many of the youth are lacking a spiritual education because of the past ties to Communism. Christina has relocated to a city called Orhei where she serves the Church. Through God’s grace, she is strengthening the spiritual foundations of the Moldovan youth that are distant from the Church, seeking to build up youth leadership within the local parish, and reaching out to non-believers. She has enabled the Moldovan youth to witness the growing spirituality of the Romanian youth by having them participate in Orthodox camps. Stretching herself in many ways, Christina is learning much about life in Moldova and how, with God, anything is possible. As she continues to serve, she appreciates your continued prayers, teamwork, and support of her in the mission field.

ROMANIA

FLOYD & ANCUTA FRANTZ

ST. DIMITRIE PROGRAM

At the St. Dimitrie Program day center, the work goes on from morning until night. Starting with the daily meal for the homeless, hot food is given to around 20 people each day. This is followed by a “Spirituality” group, and individual counseling as the clients request. At noon there is the daily 12 Step recovery group, where the clients study and discuss the basics of spirituality and recovery principals. Also each day one of the St. Dimitrie staff conducts an information meeting at the local psychiatric hospital, which encourages patients from the hospital to come to the St. Dimitrie 12 Step recovery support group. Three times each week the St. Dimitrie Program also conducts support groups and spirituality groups at the Tuberculosis hospital in Savadisla. This has been a beacon of hope in a place where little hope existed before the program was begun in 2001. Two St. Dimitrie program staff members are former patients of this hospital. They are living examples of how God uses others to change a person’s life through understanding and love of each other. Because of the success of the St. Dimitrie program, there are at least six other dioceses in Romania and the Republic of Moldova using the St. Dimitrie model to help those affected by alcoholism in their parishes.

PROTECTION OF THE THEOTOKOS FAMILY CENTER (PTFC)

The problem of child abandonment is still a current issue in Romania. Through the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center continues to fight against this phenomenon by providing food, clothing and day-care for children at risk of abandonment. To help ensure that the mother can keep the child after they complete the program, the Protection Center also provides counseling and education opportunities for the mothers of the at-risk children. According to recent studies, there are some 7,000 children still being abandoned in Romania each year. The Mother of God’s hand is clearly at work at the Protection Center. For the mothers participating in the program during the past five years, there has been only one case of abandonment. The Protection Center needs your continued prayers, gifts of clothing, and financial support so that their work can continue in Romania.

PERSONAL

Floyd and Ancuta Frantz are now celebrating their 10th year as missionaries in Romania and hope to see you during their coming parish tour in the United States. Please contact OCMC for details of their visit, or email them at f.frantz@ocmc.org.
JAMES HARGRAVE

James Hargrave continues with Kiswahili language study and en-culturation in Mwanza city, while working with the Holy Archdiocese of Mwanza on a variety of projects both in the Mwanza and Kagera Regions. In July and August, he worked with Archdiocesan leadership in hosting a three-week youth seminar in Muleba Deanery, and enjoyed welcoming an OCMC/Finnish Orthodox Mission Teaching Team to participate with local leadership in teaching Christian education at the seminar. Later this year, he hopes to assist Archdiocesan leadership and fellow OCMC Missionaries in developing long-term rural health-care ministries which included the participation of an OCMC Health Care Team in October 2011 and, God willing, more such teams in future years. In June, July and August he appreciated the presence of an American university student, Meg Engelbach, who completed her Intercultural Studies/Linguistics internship through OCMC with the Archdiocese of Mwanza. Meg helped adapt language-learning materials for East African linguaculture to better serve future OCMC Missionaries as they learn language in the local context.

MICHAEL PAGEDAS

Michael Pagedas is enjoying his service and time in Tanzania. He has been busily engaging with the community of Bukoba, where he is stationed, to form relationships both for the purpose of creating a target audience for health awareness programs and, God willing, to bring some of those community members into the Orthodox faith. Over the summer, Michael had the privilege of visiting the Turkana region in Northern Kenya both to work on a health needs assessment and to witness the faith of the Orthodox Church. He is hoping to make at least one more return visit to the Turkana people before heading back to the states. He looks forward to the remainder of his term, which will end in June, 2012.

MARIA ROEBER

Maria Roebor is happily settling into life in Bukoba, having joined her fellow Missionaries in early June. She has befriended a local Tanzanian woman who teaches her Kiswahili every afternoon, and is thrilled to announce to children who walk her to class that she is going to "school" to learn how to become Tanzanian. Maria’s first priority in these early months of service is to begin learning the language and culture, as well as to love the people of Tanzania. At her very first service in Bukoba, she was warmly welcomed by Simeoni, the sixteen-month-old son of the local priest, Fr. Spyridon. Simeoni regularly shows his affection for people at church by throwing his little arms around the legs of whichever adult is nearby, and burying his face in their knees. Sophia, his four-year-old sister, likes to sit with Maria and hold her hand during daily Matins and Vespers. Maria thanks God for the love that has been shown her by the Tanzanians.

FELICE STEWART

Felice, a nurse and Missionary to Tanzania, welcomed the opportunity to recently join a short-term medical mission to northern Uganda during which she helped educate the people who have endured a twenty year civil war on the subject of handling stress. She has wanted to do this since her first trip to Uganda in 2008. At home in Bukoba, Tanzania, Felice was also recently approached by a parishioner requesting help with addictions and, with consultation from long-term Missionary Floyd Frantz in Romania whose ministry is specialized in this area, a series of informational meetings resulted in the first 12 step group in Bukoba being started. She was soon after approached on the street by a young man requesting help with addiction who had seen her downloading information on the subject that she had received from Floyd. God is bringing people together who need recovery in this area, and the program is already beginning to produce promising results. Felice is pleased to be used by God to help initiate ministry for this with the blessing of the Church.
O ver twenty-five years ago, the Mission Center was tasked with sending a short-term team and an incredible opportunity to come together to witness the Faith in action; to work, worship, witness and glorify God; and to participate in the Great Commission of our Lord (Matt 28:19-20). As the Orthodox Christian Mission Center nears its 25th year of Teams it is easy to see the impact that Teams have had, not only in our Orthodox Churches here, but also abroad. Even with all this history and experience, team members are still faced with the question, “Do I have what it takes?”

Jesus saw in the world what others did not see, and He wants us to see what we may have never seen before. As we respond to His Will in our lives, we begin to see as Jesus saw, and the scales fall from our eyes. God brings together short-term mission teams to provide an opportunity to feel and to respond as one who lives their life in Christ-like love.

Team Member Catherine Furry, of Virginia, shares her feelings: “I wish I could capture in words what it felt like to look into the eyes of the children who carried in their younger siblings to receive treatment…and know that we were at least making a little bit of difference. I wish I could share with you the experience of the grateful smile. The need that remains both in Uganda and world-wide is still great, but each interaction with the people we encountered was an opportunity for us not only to serve and practice being witnesses of Christ’s love, but also to learn from the people with whom we interacted and built relationships.” Jesus wants to break open our hearts and for us to feel the needs, sorrow, and joys of others. As His heart went out to those in suffering, we too are free to feel deeply for our brothers and sisters.

Jesus wants us to respond by doing His Will. In the past 25 years, OCMC has provided opportunities for the faithful to respond to the need for Christian love in the world and has sent 1,620 Team members on 187 projects in 28 countries. In 2011, the Mission Center sent 137 individuals on 13 Teams: five teaching, two health care, four youth outreach, and a construction and family outreach team. Twenty-two family groups, along with individuals from the Church of Finland, Norway, Greece, and Canada, were represented on teams this year whose ages ranged from 5 years old to 84 years young. Nine Orthodox clergy, one monastic, twenty seminary students and two seminary professors participated on Teams. OCMC also collaborated with the Center for Family Care (CFC). Additionally, six long-term OCMC missionaries were assisted in their ministries by OCMC Mission Teams. By offering different types of Teams, individuals’ gifts are matched to the ministry needs around the world.

There are some prevalent themes in missions, but most important is to remember that there is a world hungering for Christ – at home and abroad. Jesus is the One who instructs us to respond by sharing His Good News to all people. OCMC Board member, John Colis of Illinois, after serving on a teaching team to Tanzania, summed up his experience by stating, “The most enjoyable part was witnessing Christ.”

Mission Teams offer each of us the opportunity to share our faith, through prayerful preparation, humility and service by living a Christ-like life so that others will see Christ. Sam Williams of Virginia discovered, “Everyone, regardless of their specific vocation, is called to participate in the Lord’s command to bring others to know Him, the one Lord
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Jesus Christ. Our mission field is our parish, our community and abroad.”

Mission Teams shape our cultural view while at the same time opening our eyes to a world that is longing to hear the saving message of the Good News. We are given an opportunity to experience God’s perspective of love and His desire for all to know Him within another culture as we join the efforts of the Church whose primary mission is to draw those who hunger and thirst for salvation into Her embrace. Teams shape us by taking us out of our comfort zone and offering us first hand encounters with the Holy Spirit and people of different backgrounds.

Stephanos Ritsi of Florida, shares, “We began celebrating the Divine Liturgy, the same sacred sacrament that millions of Orthodox celebrate every Sunday across the world. As similar as the service was, it was also different. The scorching sun; the different sounds of the Turkana language; the smells of a desert; the sand blowing with the wind; the rhythmic dancing of the congregation. Yet for all the differences, the experience melded together with the familiar; the same petitions; the same readings from the Gospel and Epistle; the same Body and Blood of Christ.”

Whether it is on a health care, construction, youth outreach or teaching team, or through acts of outreach, philanthropy or stewardship, OCMC Teams allow us the opportunity to serve others. Host for the Uganda Health Care Team, Fr. Nicholas Bayego, said to the team, “Think of what you are really doing here. You’re doing much more than just relieving a toothache or even curing malaria. I have heard things at this clinic that you don’t hear. They say to the priest, ‘Father thank you for bringing these people to help us, Father these people really care about us, they are not afraid of us. I see how you treat the people. You smile. You’re not afraid to touch them. By coming here, you are doing something different than just giving out medicines. You establish communities with people who care about each other, who are concerned about one another. In Uganda, that means something.”

Missions also shape people’s relational view as they share, serve and witness. Jordan Zanetis, of Tennessee, felt “reassured that we would keep our new relationship alive, sharing in the love of Jesus Christ with our Tanzanian brothers and sisters in the Lord, who committed themselves to keeping us and our loved ones in their fervent prayers. There is a need for continued prayers and the message of faith in the love and Resurrection of our Lord that had been built up among the Church in Ilabe. We can be assured that our mission had not only given us a new experience but an extended Christian family and home, and for that we all are richly blessed.”

Teams allow us to respond by praying, sending and going. The question becomes, “do we have what it takes?” We must be challenged to serve, to learn and to go into the world to spread His Love, His Light, and His Word. We do this where the Holy Spirit guides us in our commitment to Christian work.

Team member John Uhl of Colorado, was challenged during his Team experience and reports “It was an incredible opportunity for us to put our words into action. It was an incredible opportunity to put ourselves on the line a bit, to raise the funds, travel to the other side of the planet, fly and drive to the other side of a country, beyond cities and towns, beyond roads, beyond anything familiar to us. I must say that I am humbled and encouraged. I hope that as a community of believers here in America we all continue to not only support missions but that we put our words into action, that we all become missionaries in our communities and abroad.”

These experiences are opportunities for each of us to share our faith – some, perhaps, for the first time – and in doing so, to live with the Apostolic drive to make disciples.

For almost 25 years, Mission Teams have challenged us to understand, feel, and respond to the Great Commission of our Lord around the world. Thousands have had cross-cultural experiences and developed relationships that continue to nurture them as they use their God given gifts to serve others back at home. The words of His Eminence Jeronymous, Metropolitan of Mwanza, Tanzania, encapsulate the essence of these experiences, “Truly short-term Teams help Orthodox Christians live in reality what they believe. In Orthodoxy all nations have space, all languages can glorify the living God, all colors can gather together and in unity worship God.”

Our own lives are enriched as we respond to the question, “Do I have what it takes?” as we step out, with faith, to proclaim the message of salvation to the ends of the earth. Mission work is lived out in acts of love, care and support. We go to be a visible expression of love and unity that truly exists in our Holy Orthodox Faith. By building up the Church abroad, we are also building up the Church at home and through this prayerful service we learn that, “Yes, we have what it takes.”

RIGHT: Laypeople, monastics, clergymen, and seminarians all have something to offer toward Orthodox missions. Love for others is the greatest witness to our faith that we can offer.

Logan Johnson, a seminary student at St. Vladimir’s in Scarsdale, New York, sits with children that Mission Team members in Kenya have helped to educate in a church previous teams helped to construct.

LEFT: Mission Team member Stacey Loejos works with OCMC Missionary Felice Stewart to provide healthcare to people in Uganda. This living witness of Christ’s healing love can serve as an open invitation into the Body of the Church. Many people begin their Orthodox journey after receiving the love and care offered by Orthodox Christians.
**Teaching**

Share and teach the Orthodox Faith to youth, adults, catechumens, ministry leaders, and the faithful. Educate and encourage mission communities in the Orthodox Faith by teaching and offering a living witness through religious education, seminars, catechism, bible studies and retreats. Clergy, seminarians, teachers, youth leaders, students and those willing to teach the Faith are urged to apply.

- **Alaska**
- **Kenya**
- **Moldova**
- **Mongolia**
- **Tanzania**

**Construction**

Help build an Orthodox Church for a growing community by providing labor and service. Teams provide labor while working with members of a local Orthodox community to help construct or repair churches, clinics and other projects. In addition, help build bonds between Orthodox communities. Construction experience is welcomed, but not necessary.

- **Kenya**

**Youth ministry**

Participate in, and help organize, a youth camp program in communities that have requested religious education for the youth. Serve as an example of God’s love to youth by offering bible studies, sports, arts and crafts, teaching activities, camps and fellowship. Provide a positive witness by engaging youth around the world. Camp counselors, youth ministry directors, students and those with camp experience are encouraged to apply.

- **Moldova**
- **Guatemala**
- **South Korea**

**Health Care**

Provide a holistic witness of the Gospel by ministering to the physical needs of children and adults while providing basic health care and education. Health care teams play an integral role in the holistic mission of the Church by treating patients, offering medical care and providing health education in regions where health services are scarce. Health care personnel - doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, counselors, HIV/AIDS specialists, therapists - are especially needed.

- **Tanzania**
- **Uganda**

**Apply Today!**

All hard workers willing to share the Faith and wishing to participate and serve on an Orthodox Mission Team are urged to apply today.

**Participation Requirements**

Requirements include: a completed Mission Team application with recommendation from an Orthodox Priest; an active member of the Church; spiritually mature individual with good social skills, motivated to learn and serve, and in good physical health. All participants are expected to cover the costs of their participation and travel on the scheduled Team dates.

**Contact**

Information and applications are available online at [http://teams.ocmc.org](http://teams.ocmc.org), or contact: Orthodox Christian Mission Center, 220 Mason Manatee Way, St. Augustine, FL 32086; Tel 1-904-829-5132 or Toll-Free 1-877-GO-FORTH (463-6784), ext. 140; Fax 1-904-829-1635; Email teams@ocmc.org.

**Other**

Inquire at OCMC regarding: Seminary student scholarship grants available in 2012 and how to support OCMC Mission Team members.

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**Alaska**

- Cordero, Chad
- Davison, Joani
- Dilullo, Blake
- Dilullo, Dillon
- Kallis, Michael
- Kouloufas, Maria
- Medeiros, Corey
- Stefanos, Alexis
- Tsikouris, Michael
- Tsikouris, Pete
- Barrett, Alicia
- Godshall, Craig
- Godshall, Angelina
- Godshall, Emelia
- Godshall, Kaliope
- Godshall, Kyriaki
- Kellachow, Sophia
- Kellachow, Kathryn
- Kellachow, Valerie
- McKinney, Gregory
- Papadeas, Dr. Gregory
- Papadeas, Stellee
- Papadeas, George
- Papadeas, Nicola
- Papadeas, Veneta
- Papadeas, Yanna
- Parker, Fr. John
- Parker, Mat. Jeannette
- Wintheiser, Ronda
- Boardman, Flora
- Bobotos, Fr. Spiro
- Bobotos, Presb. Mary
- Callahan, Phoenix
- Crozier, Bobby
- Crozier, Harriet
- Franck, Antonia
- Franck, Dean
- Kosten, Monica
- Morgan, Stephen

**Albania**

- Ajafti, Richard
- Burkhard, Rondal
- Giovo, Katervina
- Henderson, Andrew
- Hoppe, Nathan
- Housley, Kyle
- Mathewson, Dr. Steve
- Murphy, Adam
- Raney, Rebecca
- Warren, Ignatius
- Watt, Dr. Marty
- Yeates, Timothy
- Veronis, Fr. Luke
- Garos, Despina
- Garos, Eleutheria
- Hoppe, Gabriela
- Hoppe, Nathan
- Kelley, Nicholas
- Kelley, Margo
- Khoury, Elena
- Moore, Christopher
- Moore, Jennifer
- Sakellarious, Ilana
- Sakellarious, Panayiots
- Sakellarious, Shannon
- Sakellarious, Sophia
- Zakar, Nicol

**Guatemala**

- Couselou, Carlie
- Hirschy, Maryrose
- Kirschner, Jessica
- Pfeiff, Susan
- Roussos, Elaine
- Roussos, John
- Runge, Suzanne
- Schultz, Patricia
- Stevens, R. Elias
- Stevens, Olivia
- Wagner, Luke

**Kenya**

- His Grace
- Bishop Savas
- Campbell, Alexis
- Manuel, Thomas
- Rtis, Fr. Martin
- Rtis, Alexandra
- Rtis, Stefanos
- Uth, John
- Uth, Genevieve
- Williams, Sam
- Aleandro, Fr. Vladimir
- Aleandro, Mat. Suzanne
- Boosalis, Harry
- Boosalis, Maria
- Holt, Abigail
- Holt, Derek
- Johnson, Logan
- Malios, Fr. Michael
- Sardell, Roberta

**Romania**

- Hasiakos, Peter
- Kurian, Anna
- Kurian, Sarah
- Johnson, Alexia
- Langlios, Laura
- Moore, Ren
- Rallis, Nikola
- Russell, Zoe
- Svanoe, Tor Vegard

**South Korea**

- Jonas, Chrysoula
- Kroll, Alastronia
- Moore, Ron
- Robinson, Margaret
- Young, Faith

**Tanzania**

- Anastasiadis,

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**Orthodox Mission Team leaders, Team members and OCMC missionaries (listed in bold) are an integral part of our Holy Orthodox Church’s undying mission effort to bring the saving message of salvation. Thank you for sharing in a journey of Faith.**

**Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share… - 1 Tim 6:18**

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**OCMC MISSION MAGAZINE** • [WWW.OCMC.ORG](http://WWW.OCMC.ORG)
Enlivening Parish Life:
Highlights from Communities Active in International Missions

“Church without mission is a contradiction in terms. A static Church which lacks a vision and a constant endeavor to proclaim the Gospel to the world could hardly be recognized as the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church to whom the Lord entrusted the continuation of His work.”

—Archbishop Anastasios of Albania

Many Orthodox parishes around North America are taking the calling of Christ’s Great Commission to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19) to heart. They are witnessing how sharing Christ’s love with the world can enliven parish life. Fr. Elias Stevens shared that as Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Mobile, Alabama, has become involved in the mission ministries of OCMC, “It has begun an awakening in our parish to a deeper calling to serve the Lord. We are experiencing momentum to grow in our service to missions at home and to missions abroad.” Fr. Elias’ parish is not unique. The following reflections from priests around the country highlight how participation in international mission ministries have affected their parish communities.

St. John the Baptist Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church, Bridgeport, Connecticut
Submitted by Fr. David Cochran, Priest

Mission ministry is a vital part of the work of the Church. Our mission work has spilled over into most aspects of our parish life. It is a vital part of our Sunday School and Youth group curriculum as well as the Church in general. As a community, we have become more aware of the need that surrounds us, locally and abroad. I must say that the community of St. John’s is a generous one that has never failed to rise to the occasion when help has been asked. Whether it was a donation to the work of the OCMC or our own monthly food bank and our Christmas time giving tree, the faithful of St. John’s, young and old, have put those words of St. Matthew into practice, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

I would like to reflect on how the OCMC “Hunger Strike” affected our parish. One of the unique aspects of the Hunger Strike was a card that each participant received at the beginning of the day. This card had a picture, name and information of a child in Tanzania in need. It was a powerful way to make what we were doing real for the kids. As we went through the day, we referred back to the cards and the information on how hard their lives were. Near the end of the day, there was an activity that had the participants draw pictures of themselves and list good and bad things about their life and then compare them to what was on their child’s card. Not only did it really sink in to the kids how important mission work was (this was the most quiet time of the hunger strike) but it was amazing how many parishioners commented on the drawings as we had them hanging in the church hall. This simple activity made the whole day real for the kids and also brought home the true message of mission work to the whole parish.

It is my hope and prayer that God will continue to inspire the members of our community to keep working in the mission ministry and that we will grow in our efforts.

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, Mobile, Alabama
Submitted by Fr. Elias Stevens, Priest

I have always thought that mission trips were only about the people and places I would go to serve, but I was wrong. I thought that the biggest changes would be in the lives of the people we went out to, but I was wrong. As I’ve learned, mission trips are about the change wrought in my own heart. Please, don’t misunderstand me, the places and people in need are the reasons we go, and their importance cannot be understated, but what I underestimated is the deep, lasting change that mission trips bring to the heart of the missionary. I believe that going on a mission trip to serve, deny yourself, and work for the good of others in a deeply spiritual context, creates change in the heart that resonates long after you leave the mission field. And in our case the work done on the other side of the globe is having a deep and lasting impact in our own community.

After our first mission trip abroad, it became crystal clear that we needed to become a mission minded parish. Those who had experienced these life altering mission trips, had an earnest desire to cultivate this same spirit in the local parishioners who didn’t go on the trip, and so they became our OCMC Ambassadors to the church. It has created a spirit of intrigue. Who wouldn’t have thought that a mission trip to Guatemala would be the impetus to do a Missions at Home project? Our own parish’s first Missions at Home project...

Continued next page

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ABOVE: One of the ways Orthodox youth are becoming involved in missions is through Hunger Strike. At St. John the Baptist Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Church in Bridgeport, Connecticut, youth fasted and prayed together to raise support and awareness for Orthodox mission efforts in Tanzania.

UNDERSTATED: The deep, lasting change that mission trips bring to the heart of the missionary is the kind of impact we strive to create in the hearts of ordinary people.

BELOW: Through activities and prayerful reflection, the youth of St. John the Baptist in Bridgeport, Connecticut, came to appreciate how different their lives are from those in Tanzania, but also that they share a common bond in Jesus Christ through the Orthodox Church.

ABOVE: Many of those who experience life-altering mission trips have an earnest desire to cultivate this same spirit within their communities upon their return from the mission field. Here, John Roussos, OCMC Mission Team member and Ambassador, is embraced by one of the children living at the Hogar Rafael Orphanage in Guatemala.

BELOW: Through activities and prayerful reflection, the youth of St. John the Baptist in Bridgeport, Connecticut, came to appreciate how different their lives are from those in Tanzania, but also that they share a common bond in Jesus Christ through the Orthodox Church.

BELOW: Fr. Elias Stevens of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Mobile, Alabama (seen here during an OCMC mission trip to Guatemala), reflects, “mission trips are about the change wrought in my own heart... work done on the other side of the globe is having a deep and lasting impact in our own community.”

DEVELOPING MISSIONS

ABOVE: Orthodox Christians from Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Mobile on the OCMC mission trip to Guatemala. Many Orthodox communities across the United States are witnessing how sharing Christ’s love with the world can enliven parish life.
We Need Your Help

In addition to the valuable support we receive from you currently that goes directly toward our various ministries, there are some special needs we have here in the office. If you would like to sponsor any of these items please contact Kenneth Kidd by phone at 1-877-GO-FORTH (463-6784) ext. 161, or by e-mail at kenny@ocmc.org, if you are able to help foster the growth of mission ministries by supporting any of the projects listed below. Thank you for your continued prayers!

Furniture for 3 Offices .......................................................... $2,300 each
OCMC Displays (for sharing missions with the faithful) ....................... $2,000
Binding Machine (for the production of reports and training materials) ........ $850
4 Computers ................................................................................. $800 each
2 Large LCD Monitors (for training) .............................................. $800 each
6 Dorm Room Closet Systems ....................................................... $400 each

Orthodoxy and its world-wide mission. The OCMC has been immensely influential to the spiritual vitality of all segments of the parish community!

Building a missions program in your parish
There are numerous opportunities for parishes, with the blessing of the parish priest and parish council, to join in this growing international missions movement and to experience the spiritual growth that can come from offering a vibrant living witness to the Orthodox Christian faith. These include establishing an OCMC Ambassador, Coordinating a Missions Retreat, Hosting a Missions Luncheon/Dinner, and Holding a Mission Walk.

Establishing an OCMC Ambassador
An OCMC Ambassador at a parish can be the primary source for missions information, materials, and the “right hand” of both the parish priest and parish council in creating and implementing mission initiatives. Information about becoming an Ambassador is available at www.ocmc.org.

Coordinating a Missions Retreat
OCMC is available to help coordinate day-long, or multi-day, missions retreats featuring speakers who can share their mission experience and facilitate prayerful discussion about the importance of missions.

Hosting a Missions Luncheon/Dinner
Missions luncheons/dinners can take many forms, from a missions-focused coffee hour following Liturgy with information and a donation basket to an elaborate banquet featuring a keynote speaker with a menu highlighting mission countries around the world. The opportunities are endless for spaghetti dinners, potlucks, pancake breakfasts, buffets, barbeques, international food showcases, tapas, etc.

Plan a Walk for Missions
While often targeting the youth of the parish, these events regularly involve and inspire young and old alike as they deepen an awareness for both the world and Church abroad.

These items listed are just a sampling of many opportunities. For more information about coordinating any of these activities at your local parish, or just to brainstorm possibilities, contact Kenneth Kidd, Annual Gifts Officer, at 904-829-5132, ext 161,
MISSION PRIEST SPOTLIGHT

Mission Priest Spotlight:
Fr. Innocentios Byakatonda

by Michelle DeAngelis

For over 25 years the Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) program has offered financial assistance to Orthodox priests around the world. Several of the priests supported by SAMP have also been equipped to proclaim the Gospel through OCMC’s Theological Training Program, which provides scholarships to further their education. These programs have been established to raise up indigenous church leadership in a way that preserves culture and ensures a local expression of the Orthodox Christian faith.

One such priest is Fr. Innocentios Byakatonda.

Even as a young man in Uganda Fr. Innocentios, an Orthodox priest supported by OCMC’s SAMP program, possessed a deep desire to serve the Orthodox Church. As an Orthodox priest he served as Dean of the Makarios III seminary and the Vice Rector for the Orthodox Teachers College of Africa. He also served as the parish priest at Holy Unmercenary in Nairobi.

From the time he was young, he wanted to be a teacher and priest and serve his church in this manner. In the early 1990s, Fr. Innocentios received a scholarship to study at St. Tikhon's Seminary in South Canaan, Pennsylvania; he graduated in 1996 with a Master of Divinity degree. At this time he pursued further studies in Boston, Massachusetts at Holy Cross Orthodox Seminary. The Orthodox Christian Mission Center provided Fr. Innocentios with a scholarship to complete his education. He graduated in summer of 1999. After his graduation he returned to East Africa to serve the Church.

Eventually, Fr. Innocentios went on to become the Dean of the Makarios III seminary and the Vice Rector for the Orthodox Teachers College of Africa. In addition he served as the parish priest at Holy Unmercenaries in Nairobi. However, Fr. Innocentios has just embarked on a new and challenging journey.


South Sudan is the world’s newest country, officially attaining independence from the Republic of Sudan on July 9, 2011. For much of the past five decades the areas of north and south Sudan have been embroiled in a civil war in which millions of people have perished. South Sudan is one of the poorest countries, with possibly the worst health situation, in the world. Fr. Innocentios, under the Omophorion of His Eminence Jonah of Uganda, is entrusted with the immense task of establishing the Orthodox Church in this newly created state.

The new Patriarchal Vicar of South Sudan, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Innocentios Byakatonda will bring the message of the Gospel to those who are suffering in South Sudan. He is a shining example of how your financial contributions to the SAMP program can help bring Christ’s life-giving message to those who need it most.

The SAMP program currently supports nearly 400 priests in 19 countries. For more information on how you can become involved please visit http://samp.ocmc.org or contact Michelle DeAngelis by phone at 904-829-5132 x163 or by email at samp@ocmc.org.

LEFT: With the blessings of His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa, Fr. Innocentios Byakatonda became Patriarchal Vicar of South Sudan, Africa’s newest nation, on March 13, 2011.
Make This Christmas Count

This Nativity honor someone you love AND support international Orthodox Missions.

This donation is perfect for Godparents, Sunday School Teachers, friends and family. OCMC will send you a card with a Nativity greeting to present to your loved one acknowledging the work around the world that has been made possible in their name. One (1) card can be purchased per $15 donation, but this amount will not appear on the card.

Please place your order before December 10th so that we can send your card before Nativity. For more information, or to order please contact Phyllis Skinner by telephone at 877-GO-FORTH, Ext 164 or visit www.ocmc.org.