The OCMC's Mission magazine is published twice a year as a resource to educate and engage people in Orthodox missions.

EDITOR: Fr. Martin Ritsi
MANAGING EDITOR: Alex Goodwin
DESIGN: Cameron Thorp

As the official missions agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America, it is OCMC’s mission to make disciples of all nations by bringing people to Christ and His Church.

For more information about OCMC visit our website at www.ocmc.org

Mailing Address
Orthodox Christian Mission Center
220 Mason Manatee Way
St. Augustine, FL 32086

PH: (904) 829-5132 Fax: (904) 829-1635
Toll Free: 1-877-GO-FORTH (463-6784)
E-mail: missions@ocmc.org

Program Contacts:
Rev. Fr. Martin Ritsi ................. Executive Director
Dn. James Nicholas .................. Missionary Director
Andrew Lekos ........................ Mission Teams Director
Jack Klees ............................ Finance Director
Alex Goodwin ...................... Communications Director
Penelope Petropoul ................. Major Gifts Officer
Kenneth Kidd ...................... Annual Gifts Officer

OCMC Missionaries and their families:
Albania: Anastasia Pamela Barkosale; Georgia Bendo;
Nathan & Gabriela Hoppe; Dr. Jeffrey & Caryn Macionaldi;
Stephanos & Alexandra Ritsi
Guatemala: Fr. John & Pres. Alexandra Chakos
Mongolia: Kurt Bringerud
Romania: Floyd & Arcuda Frantz

OCMC BOARD OF DIRECTORS:
Fr. George P Liacopulos .................. President
Met. Savas Zemblitas ............ Assembly Liaison
Mr. John N Collins ................. Vice President
Mr. Clifford Argue ...................... Previous President
Mr. William O Birchfield III .......... Treasurer
Fr. Alexander Veronis ................. President Emeritus
Dr. Gayle Woloschak .................. Secretary

OCMC BOARD MEMBERS:
Fr. John Chalikos, Fr. John Christakos, Mr. George Conopelis,
Mr. Patrick R Crosson, Dr. John G Demakis, Michael Griv-
Mr. John C Hopchak, Mr. Bruce Humphrey, Fr. Luke Milla-
y, Mr. Scott Mitchell, Mrs. Helen Nicastro, Fr. John Parker,
Fr. Philemon Patillas, Fr. Ted Pitarshuk, Dcn. Andrew J Rubis,
Mrs. Elizabeth Stanta, Fr. Matthew Tate, Fr. Luke Veronis

3 A Message from the Executive Director
Fr. Martin Ritsi

4 Orthodox Witness Against New Challenges
Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea

8 God's Showers of Love in Turkana
Olenka Zharsky

14 The Necessity of Missions: A Missionary’s Perspective
Stephanos Ritsi

OCMC Mission Teams .......................................................... 13
2014 OCMC Mission Team Opportunities

OCMC Missionaries ........................................................... 18
Missionary Updates

Mission Priest Spotlight ....................................................... 21
Finding Kenya at a Coffee Hour in Virginia:
Parishes at Home Supporting Priests Abroad, Markella Balasis

Developing Missions .......................................................... 22
Beyond the ‘Like’, Spreading the Faith through Social Media, Emily Walker

On the cover: Two Turkana boys learn about the Orthodox Faith through icons that were given to them by OCMC Mission Team members. Thousands of people have been welcomed into the Body of Christ through the many Orthodox churches that have been planted in the region.
The goal – reach 4 new villages where there is NO Christian presence. Last spring, an OCMC team of seminary students went to one of the most remote and difficult regions of Kenya. Are there still significant numbers of people that have not heard the Christian message? This journey was a testimony to that. Semi-nomadic peoples gathered on the hot desert sands. Many heard the message of salvation for the first time! It was not easy and definitely not comfortable. The journey included power encounters and physical hardships. However, the grace of God overshadowed the mission, and there was even a miraculous display of desert rain! Hundreds heard the Gospel message. All 4 villages pleaded for us to return. In this issue, Olenka Zharsky shares a moving reflection of her participation on this OCMC Spring Break team. In her article, we see how God worked dramatically in the lives she touched and herself as well.

One day before that journey, Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea preached a powerful message. This time the preaching was not to nomadic desert tribes sitting under the hot sun. It was to the faithful in the USA, seated comfortably in a church banquet hall. The Metropolitan delivered a heartfelt call to missions at the annual Team Chicago Banquet. Metropolitan Ambrosios is a contemporary missionary leader. His message focuses on the conditions of three and a half billion people living in East Asia. He speaks about the absence of Orthodox missions. In his message, he repeats the words of St. John Chrysostom who faced a similar challenge in his own day to energize the Church to its missionary call. The address, which is included in this issue, also gives suggestions on what we can do to meet the challenges.

Finally, a number of new missionaries entered the mission field this year. One of those missionaries wrote our third feature article. It is a personal reflection on missions from the perspective of a graduating seminary student preparing to leave for missionary service. Missions is a calling. Missions is an imperative. Missions is a source of renewal. Missions is tradition, and it is an expression of love toward your neighbor. With these reflections, he and his wife left for Albania and now serve there under Archbishop Anastasios.

The calling is great. The need is immense.

The calling is great. The need is immense. In these recent months, we have participated in entire villages hearing about Christ for the first time. Still, there are not only hundreds and thousands to reach, but billions! Quoting D.G. Koutroumpes, Metropolitan Ambrosios writes: “The period of time between the Ascension of Jesus Christ and His glorious second coming, namely the period we now live in, is a mission period; it is an allotment of time granted by God, so that the gospel…may be heard in all parts of the earth….” May the Lord of the Harvest inspire us to participate even more in the challenges ahead and the awesome calling of this time we live in.

Fr. Martin Ritsi with Fr. Vladimir Paul Lonyuduk on the 2013 teaching and evangelism team that traveled to the Turkana region of northern Kenya. Fr. Martin and Fr. Vladimir led the team in sharing the Gospel with many people in remote villages who had never before heard its message.
With the center of global power shifting to East Asia, it will be imperative that the Church be ready to offer a witness to the Christian Faith. Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, under the pastoral care of Fr. Aleksei Trubach, is an example of the growing Church on the Asian continent.

Pakistan is home to more than 180 million people, of which the overwhelming majority are non-Christian. OCMC has been working with Fr. John Tanveer in Pakistan. With this support, a church is being built for the growing community of believers to whom Fr. John ministers.

OCMC has been sending Mission Teams to Asia for years. Here Team Member Alastriona Kroll is pictured with a young girl from Korea. Inter-Orthodox cooperation and cross cultural missions is vital to spreading the Faith throughout Asia.
At the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), under the inspired guidance of Fr. Martin Ritsi, very significant work has been carried out for many years to help spread an Orthodox witness to “all nations”. I know that many of you have participated in OCMC programs, and I hope and pray that this work continues to progress in quality and quantity for the glory of God. Let me also take this opportunity to express, on behalf of all the members of the Church of Korea, our heartfelt gratitude for the very important assistance that OCMC volunteers have offered us in recent years with running our Metropolis’s summer English Language camps. This support has not only enabled us to offer a better program and witness to the camp’s Korean participants, it has blessed us with new spiritual friendships across continents and promoted witness in the United States regarding our efforts.

The theme of my talk is Orthodox Witness against new challenges. Our hopes regarding Orthodox Witness in the world must always be built on a foundation of facts and truth—even if these facts and truth are painful and discouraging. God is truth (John 14:6,17) and witnessing to the true God requires honesty. I say this because my comments tonight are offered in this spirit—with the aim of honesty for the sake of hope. And because it is my honest belief that the location of today’s great new challenges lie primarily in East Asia, particularly in the Far East, I ask you to please allow me to focus only on that region and forgive me for speaking in a very candid, honest way.

As we all know, the center of global power and civilization is constantly shifting. These historic shifts have occurred through divine economy, in order to avoid the cultivation of a single people, ethnocentric conscience, or imperialist mentality and expansionist policies. In classical times, for example, the center of world power and civilization was glorious Greece, with Athens being “the School of the Universe”. Later, mighty Rome became the world’s political power center, which eventually shifted to the queen of cities, Constantinople. Centuries later, political dominance moved to Western Europe and then to America. Today the center of the world, I believe, lies in the Far East, particularly in China. The sleeping lion has awakened. The spread of the Asian race and the Chinese market in every corner of our planet is a most palpable and undeniable fact.

Omitting other shocking statistics, let me just remind you that when we talk about East Asia we actually mean half of the earth’s population. Here are some of the latest statistics:

- China: 1.4 Billion people
- India: 1.2 Billion
- Indonesia: 240 Million
- Pakistan: 180 Million
- Bangladesh: 150 Million
- Japan: 128 Million
- Philippines: 103 Million
- Korea (South and North): 74 Million
- Thailand: 69 Million

So, let me ask: Who among us has wondered how many of these three and a half billion (3,500,000,000) people in East Asia, as of today, in 2013, are Christians? And, furthermore, how many are Orthodox Christians? The answer is painful, and I do not want to dwell on it. But please allow me to ask just this question: How many among the Orthodox Christians in America are aware of the fact that “the joyful news of the Resurrection” has not yet reached the ends of the earth? Of course, in our worship we repeat the psalmic verse, “Their proclamation went forth into all the earth” (Psalm 18:5, cf. Romans 10:18), or we sing: “Your Nativity, O Mother of God, heralded joy to the whole universe” and also, “The Cross is the guardian of the whole universe”, etc.
In our liturgical sources, it seems that the concept of “universe” for us still refers to the residential area around the Mediterranean, just as it did in antiquity. When we Orthodox boast about the universality of Orthodoxy, many non-Orthodox Christians, being aware of factual, statistical data, smile politely—knowing that the reality is quite different. And, of course, non-Christians completely ignore us. Thus our self-proclaimed “universality” rings our hollow, like a “noisy gong or a clanging symbol” (1 Corinthians 13:1), a remnant of a bygone and pre-globalized era.

Simply by considering these basic facts about Orthodoxy’s minimal witness in East Asia, we become totally convinced that the Orthodox Church is facing new and cosmogenic challenges. Ours is a small, soft voice amidst a loud cacophony encompassing half of the earth’s people. Yet this reality is also an opportunity of unprecedented significance. If we seize this opportunity while we have the chance and we respond with zeal, dedication, and hard work, Orthodox Mission will write golden pages in history for the glory of God and of our Holy Church.

Please allow me to discuss a few of the specific challenges and opportunities that exist currently in the Far East.

In recent decades, our Ecumenical Patriarchate, continuing its long missionary tradition, has organized mission work in nine populous countries of East Asia, namely, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Pakistan, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand. In order to provide continuous support to those who serve as missionaries in these countries, it founded twenty years ago in Athens the “Patriarchal Institution of Orthodox Mission of the Far East” with the approval of the Greek government. Those who serve in this institution are all volunteers who make great sacrifices daily in order to meet their many and varied responsibilities, but, as you can imagine, this is only one step—from one Orthodox community, Greece, which is struggling with its own challenges—and needs of the Church in the East are immense.

The challenge that springs from the East is really unique and massive. In China, for example, after so many years of oppression and deprivation of religious freedom, there is currently a great interest in Christianity. It is estimated that every day some forty thousand (40,000) Chinese embrace Christianity from the missionary work done by non-Orthodox. 40,000 converts a day! The Orthodox missionaries are still very few in this area. If we continue the same indifference on our part, after some decades, unfortunately, there will be a great number of Chinese Christians, but not Orthodox Christians. And then we will all be responsible for seeing fulfilled the words of Jesus Christ: “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Now please allow me to make one more reference to the mission work of the non-Orthodox. Before the division of Korea into North and South in 1945, the number of Christians in both Koreas was approximately 1,000,000; in a total population of 25,000,000 that is 4%. Today, in South Korea alone, with a population of 49,000,000, Christians are more than 13 million, that is, 26.5%. This means that, within the last sixty-eight years, there has been an explosive increase in the number of Christians in South Korea. And not only that, but now they export missionaries! According to statistics from various theological colleges and seminaries, each year around 2,000 students graduate and are sent as missionaries to other lands. It is estimated that as of today, 11,500 Korean missionaries are active in the most unlikely and distant parts of the world. There are also Korean missionaries here in America and even in Greece. I remember one of them, before starting his mission work in Orthodox Greece, asked a Greek-speaking Orthodox Korean of our Church to translate a pamphlet into Greek so as to help him enlighten the Greeks!

We perhaps get angry by listening to all of this. However, instead of getting angry with others who do their work as well as they can, it would be better if we critiqued ourselves, seeing that those others are “more shrewd than the sons of light” (Luke 16:8). There are numerous Orthodox theologians in traditionally Orthodox countries as well as here in America. In Greece, for example, there are approximately 10,000 lay theologians; 4,000 of them work in public education, while the remaining 6,000 are involved in the private sector. What great work could be done if only a fraction of these theologians would decide to engage in missionary work? Maybe some of them are afraid to move out of their homeland because they fear the unknown, the difficulties and adventures that lie ahead. I wonder, however, if the same applies to those who work in various multinational companies. Allow me again to mention to your loving ears the following points. It is estimated that 60% of the crude oil to China is carried by Greek ships. Although nowadays the crews consist not only of Greeks, nonetheless, many Greek sailors find themselves in ports or shipyards in the Far East. Many of them even live in this area with their wives. And, quite a few times, when their child is born in Korea, they ask us to go to the hospital or they come to the church to read the customary prayers. Today, numerous Orthodox young people leave their homeland and their families for professional reasons. Don’t you think that some of us, who profess to love the Church, should do at least the same thing for the sake of the Gospel?

My beloved, consider the following quote: “The period of time between the Ascension of Jesus Christ and His glorious second coming, namely the period we now live in, is a mission period; it is an allotment of time granted by God, so that the ‘gospel’, the joyous message of the victory of God for the salvation of man, may be heard in all parts of the earth, so that all the chosen may be able to enter the Divine Kingdom, namely the Church.”

We must admit in a spirit of humility and repentance that Orthodox’s missionary ideal and interest has waned in recent years, and this is due to the reduction of our spiritual bond with Christ and to the powerful forces of secularization.

Let me invite you now to hear and reflect on the words of the great Missionary, St. John Chrysostom. St. John is here comparing the missionary work of the apostles and teachers of the early Church to that of his listeners, however, we can all easily imagine what he would say about us today. He states,

“Instead, we want to enjoy luxury, and relaxation, and our comforts. We do not dare to go away from our land; we only seek how to have a good time, to make our house cozy and satisfy our consumer mania. Which of us was left hungry for the sake of spreading the Gospel? Who stayed in the desert? Who traveled to a distant country?...Who endured daily death? Because of our behavior, those believers who surround us become all the more indifferent...And if there is someone who has even a little of these old virtues, after having abandoned the cities and places where people gather, the socializing with others and their teaching, he takes refuge in the mountains; and if he is asked for the reasons that made him leave the world, his response is difficult to accept. He says, ‘I abandoned the world so as not to get carried away and lose my soul and get out of the path of virtue.’”

And St. John Chrysostom continues:

“Isn’t it better for you to lose a bit of your virtue so as to win the others, instead of remaining up high and seeing your brothers being lost; therefore, when the others neglect virtue, and those who do care about her stay away from the array, then how shall we defeat the enemies?”

Following these more theoretical points, I’d like, with your permission, to offer now six practical suggestions for what should be done to seize the current opportunity for Orthodox Witness:

1. The establishment of Mission Seats in Orthodox Theological Schools.

It is really a shame to see the non-Orthodox run Seats on Missionary Studies, even in small seminaries, while Orthodox theological schools and seminaries around the world lack such an important perspective, as far as I know. The abolition of the Mission Seat at the University of Athens School of Theology in 1994, that was created in 1979 with the initiative of Professor Elias Voulgarakes, and which “offered a world first in Orthodoxy”, greatly damaged Orthodox Mission studies. So, inevitably, rather than employing a scientific view on mission, having as background the scientific data deriving from a serious study of the local philosophical, religious, artistic, and cultural aspects of the natives, unfortunately, we often observe a folk type of mission being carried out which is mostly Greek-centered, Russian-centered, American-centered, etc. Such missionary work, however, does not convince the native population that the local Orthodox Church is truly their own Church. It is therefore very doubtful whether in the future it will touch upon the hearts of the educated population of the countries to which our preaching is addressed.
Moreover, we must admit that we have not yet crystallized a clear theory on Orthodox Mission; neither have we formed the necessary Canon Law for the so-called Foreign Mission, which is so essential in preventing anyone from improvising when asked to provide responsible solutions and answers to a variety of daily problems in his ministry.

2. The Creation of missionary groups in the Homeland.

There are many things that can be done by volunteers working behind the lines. For example, helping in the preparation of Orthodox catechism texts and catechetical aids; translating patristic works; creating audio-visual and web pages; developing musical texts; as well as making architectural plans and structural designs for the construction of churches and other ecclesiastical buildings. Such efforts can be coordinated by missionary groups like this one in Chicago.

3. Sermons, lectures, and courses on Missions.

For the cultivation of personal missionary callings and missionary ideals in the hearts of the people of God, we believe it will prove very beneficial if supporters of missions—like you who are here tonight—could deliver regular sermons and lectures on missions, teaching young children in Sunday Schools about mission work, informing youth groups such as GOYA, as well as organizing related events in the communities. Our youth are more “global” in their thinking than many of us adults are; they will be engaged in their faith if given the chance to become enthusiastic about Orthodox missions.

4. Educating staff with an emphasis on learning the local language.

The best investment right now is to encourage and even to offer incentives and grants to faithful and talented young men and women in order to specialize in the languages, history, and philosophy of the Far East. By doing so, they will be able to begin translation projects of patristic texts and other Orthodox books. The spread of Orthodox literature through books and the Internet is sure to begin translation projects of patristic texts and catechetical aids for reference to cover his/her scholarly needs and expectations. The Internet has become a school, mainly for young people, which indeed works on a 24-hour basis. The shift from the “written word” to “electronic discourse” is already a reality. The Internet has become the modern world’s pulpit, and it is widely used by non-Orthodox missionaries.

5. Systematic use of the “electronic pulpit.”

Today almost everything is promoted via the Internet. To reach the unchurched, the Internet is vital. Furthermore, it is very rare for an educated person not to utilize various electronic databases for reference to cover his/her scholarly needs and expectations. The Internet has become a school, mainly for young people, which indeed works on a 24-hour basis. The shift from the “written word” to “electronic discourse” is already a reality. The Internet has become the modern world’s pulpit, and it is widely used by non-Orthodox missionaries. The Orthodox Witness in the modern world has to make use of the “electronic pulpit”, too, so that its message can have a truly universal appeal. Let us not forget that more “residents” of the Internet can mean more “members” of the Church.

And finally, I would like to add that the Internet is a convenient missionary field for those who do not decide, to or cannot serve, for various reasons, in the front line, but prefer to work from home instead. “It is possible [even] for those who stay home to work as fishermen”, according to St. John Chrysostom’s advice.

6. Inter-Orthodox cooperation.

Asking once more for your tolerance, I would like to add the following thoughts relating more to the administration of the Church rather than to individuals or private entities. I surely do not ignore the fact that drawing parallels between the work of the non-Orthodox and that of the Orthodox is disproportionate, because of their numerical, economic, and logistical superiority. I remember the reaction of an American pastor when he asked me what the annual budget of the Greek Orthodox Church is for missions. When I told him, he replied, “So little! But this is the annual budget of only my parish for missions!” I honestly wonder if there is even one Orthodox parish in the world that has an annual budget for Missions.

There is, I believe, only one way to reduce the aforementioned imbalances in resources, and that is inter-Orthodox cooperation. This means all Orthodox should extend our hands, leaving aside any selfish nationalistic interests and preferences, and set our Orthodox beliefs as the foundation of our ministry. The OCMC has been exemplary in this regard. However, for a more effective organization of missionary work worldwide, we need to establish, under the auspices of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, an inter-Orthodox missionary institution which will study and coordinate the issues and oversee all missionary developments. Apart from the major benefits such inter-Orthodox cooperation would bring, it would also be the most important testimony and proof to the world that the Church is “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.”

Your Eminence, beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, I know that all I have mentioned tonight is not easily digested or implemented. A proper response to today’s challenges for Witness requires not only a change in mentality, but also many struggles and sacrifices. Indeed, sometimes even our own lives are at risk because, as we all know, there are still areas in the world where there is no religious freedom. In these areas, various non-Orthodox missionaries have been running “underground churches” for many years. I know of Protestant Korea couples who, under the disguise of studying, carry out secret missionary work in China and Indonesia. I cannot accept the idea that the early Christian spirit of the catacombs and martyrdom has been totally lost among the Orthodox; yet, I also cannot deny that a disconnect exists between our repeated praise of the martyrs in our worship and our practices of Orthodox Witness.

I hope what we have considered together, though simple and more or less known, may serve as an opportunity for a fruitful discussion. And may this discussion, in turn, be transformed into missionary callings and personal decisions for a dynamic response to new challenges to further promote Orthodox Witness.
Olenka Zharsky

Suffering often has a metaphorical aspect. No one ever understands someone else’s pain. We understand the physical pain of others on a scale of one to ten. We express our spiritual suffering as a “heavy soul.” And when it comes to love we feel “broken hearts.” So, I will not try to describe my time in Kenya through the window of what kind of suffering I saw. Thirst and hunger are experiences for the body, not words. I will, however, remind you that the communities I was with in the Turkana need water. They need prayers for seasonable weather, and water wells would substantially bless their lives, backs, and livestock. With this said, I will attempt to express my joy. Remembering the suffering that I saw brings me to my knees in prayer, but it is the joy from my trip which quickens my heart and puts a smile on my lips—that’s what I want to share with you.

A Memory

Today was warm, but the clouds undulated and rippled with thickness. As I walked outside, I would periodically feel the unexpected touch of a raindrop. I thought of Africa. I thought about our team’s third night in the bush. The wind woke me during that mysterious time which the sun and the moon fight to claim. It was either late at night or early in the morning when it began to rain, and it was then that my heart and mind also battled with each other. My mind wanted to claim the ordinariness of this natural occurrence—it was just rain. My heart, however, pounded at my chest, shouting, “Glory be to God for all things!” I have never felt this kind of joy.

Now, I have always loved rain; in fact, it is my favorite kind of weather. However, rain has never been (until that night in Turkana) the mercy, love, and evidence of God literally soaking me! As we all hurried to pack up our things and get out of the river bed, I saw Losekan, the elder from the village of Kangataruk. We both bore that type of smile that hurts your face, yet exists mostly in the eyes. I stood there in front of this African leader who was even more magnificent in the dark and inspired even more respect standing in the pouring rain. We pointed to the sky and spoke only one word: “Akuj!” Yet in those two minutes with him and the few women behind him, we partook of an hour-long dialogue of love for each other and praise and thanksgiving to God.

Brief History

For over five years northern Kenya has suffered from insufficient rain. The drought has dried their grazing land and shriveled their animals, which are their primary source of food. It was a miracle that it rained that night. As much of a wonder as that rain was, I’m sure it is not too hard to believe. What may be harder to believe is that experience with the elder. After all, this OCMC mission was only ten days long, not to mention the seemingly scanty four days in the bush, with only a day in each of the four communities. What could possibly get done in such a short amount of time? What sort of relationships can flourish under such parched conditions? However, I ask you to dust off a memory: think of a day when you met someone you love for the first time, whether it was your spouse, your child, or a dear friend. Think about how beautiful and significant those moments were, despite the limits of time. Keep that knowledge in your hearts as I introduce you to only one of the four communities with which we shared Christ, love, and laughter...

A Rough Start

We arrived at Kangataruk and were welcomed by a group of women. We greeted each other with local handshakes and universal smiles. With the help of our translators (two local priests and a seminarian...
The first Orthodox community established in Turkana was St. John the Baptist. The parish priest, Fr. Vladimir Paul Lonyuduk, has welcomed scores of Mission Team members over the years. These teams are now taking the message of the Gospel deep into the interior of the Turkana region to share it with people who have never before heard it.

It can be nerve-wracking for mission team members who are tasked with teaching the Faith to people who speak a different language and who are from a different culture. The act itself is a profound expression of faith, something Olenka demonstrates as she teaches these Turkana children about Christ.
from Nairobi), we conversed with the women and later had the pleasure of hearing them sing for us. We learned that most of their songs were about God and flowing rivers. The women were all beautiful. They stood out like bright rubies and colorful gems against the yellow sands of Africa. There was one woman named Marda, however, who shone more brightly than the rest. She was very small in stature and thin. Though she did not bear the wrinkles of wisdom, she was sagacious to the core. Marda consistently thought and subtly smiled before she spoke. She was welcoming yet reserved. You could tell in her eyes that there were questions sparkling behind them. Despite her restraint I admired her, and I would do so even more, once I found out the reasons for her hesitation.

After a while, we saw the men coming near to where we were. Losekan, the elder of the community, carried himself with the same air as Marda. He greeted us with respect and asked us about our journey. The people then gathered together under the shade of a tree and began to discuss our team’s presence in their land. There had been rumors about visitors in the area and they were concerned that perhaps we were one of those groups their neighbors had warned them about: people hunting for oil, or “missionaries” eager to erect schools and to impose customs upon them which were not their own. The team sat near the trucks and prayed. The Turkana community participated in fervent discussion. There was a younger man we saw often getting up to speak, and all the people listened closely when he did. He was different. On the outside he appeared the same as the rest of the men, yet his voice was much more gentle, and his movements and gestures were lighter than air. He was also unique because he smiled boundlessly, from the moment he met our team. It turned out that this was the elder’s son, Essua. Between the things Essua and others in the group said, in the end we received the blessing of the elder and were permitted to speak to them about why we had come. We were there to share with these people the story of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Teaching Wise Men
It went something like this as I moved some thorns in order to sit in front of leaders from the interior of Africa, I thought how, whether they sit or lie reclined, leaders of Africa are regal. I am not the best public speaker; in fact, I fear it most of the time. And yet, for some reason, in front of these outstanding men, I did not blush or stutter. I told them, “If I were to tell you that I know everything about God, I would be lying.” After Fr. Zachariah translated for me, I knew they agreed because of their utterance of approval: “Mm” or “Ey.” I told them that all I know is what God has sent us to tell them, that He is One God in three Persons. God the Father sent His Son Jesus Christ here to be with us on earth. Jesus Christ conquered death and sent the Holy Spirit here after He left to go back to be with the Father in His Kingdom. I used analogies like three flames becoming one when they touch, in order to explain the Trinity. They fully understood this concept and agreed.

I asked them how many of them would leave their herd (which sometimes averaged up to 2,000 goats) to search for a single goat that had gone astray. They all answered: “Of course I would search!” They all listened in stillness, as I told them that we are that lost goat, and Christ came to search for us and teach us how to return back to paradise. The elder and the other ruling men contemplated this and other things I had said. They commented, “Jesus was a good man!” and “God loves us!” But they also said things such as “We like what you tell us and that you came to teach us today, but who will teach us tomorrow?” I told them that some of us came because we are considering dedicating a lot of our time teaching about Christ. I also mentioned that there are four priests in the local town who are willing to come until other teachers can spend time with them. They again nodded their heads and gave the approving, attentive “Ey.” Losekan, a man with many responsibilities, spoke, saying, “But if Jesus loves us, why does it not rain, why do our children and animals die?” My partner Niko told them about Christ fasting in the desert and rejecting the temptation to turn stones to bread, because the spirit must be filled with God much more than our bodies need food. The men hurt from these dreadful events and situations which bruise their minds and bodies, yet they understood and accepted that today, creation and man groan in terrible pain because both seek reunion with God. The elder looked at me, and he agreed with what was discussed. He smiled and
gave his thanks for our coming to visit with them. He had known Christ for a few hours, yet boldly and reverently took on the blessings of suffering. I have known Christ since childhood, and still continue to resist Him and the suffering He allows in order to bring me close to Him. I thought about these things while they told us about a few camels which they thought had been stolen or gotten lost. After the end of our group discussions, all of us there broke up into smaller groups. Some went to prepare food, and others rested or discussed further under the setting sun. Near one of the trucks one could see some of us sitting at the feet of Essua. The young man told us a little about himself and his recent adventures.

**A Lost Disciple**

Essua told us that it was an answer to his prayers that we had come. Once during his travels he had heard about Christ, so he went out and walked until he found someone who could tell him more about this man “Jesus.” His journeying brought him to two churches, and inside they were telling stories about Jesus. He had many questions, but they did not give him answers. He wanted deeper explanations, but the people were not able to provide any. Our hearts leaped, experiencing a joy we had never felt before. God had found us worthy to quench the thirst of a spiritual man! Essua told us that we answered all his questions. And we marveled how the Holy Spirit had helped us with our words so that this young and new disciple could know about his God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He had one request, however; he asked us to tell him another story about the Lover of Mankind. We told him Christ’s first miracle (John 2:1-11). We explained a little about the miracle as we read it to him. I can’t count the number of times I have been read my Lord’s first miracle; I can, however, count how many times I was neither moved nor bothered to contemplate this first sign of God: zero. When we told the story to the elder’s son, he did not stir. After we had finished, he raised his eyes a little higher and thought for a few moments. Then he radiantly smiled, and said, “I understand it. Thank you.”

He understood? To me it is such a simple miracle, and despite my hours of seminary and being told about the complexity of this epic event, I still could not connect my heart to it. Yet Essua with his lips and eyes told us that he fully understood. He drew a spiritual silk thread between the words of this miracle and the events of his own life. I was amazed and most of all humbled. It is written that the Son reveals such things as these to those whom He chooses (Matthew 11:25-28), and this up-and-coming elder was worthy to understand—he had labored for the Lord. I was happy for him and thankful as well. It was through him that I was reminded of how blessed God has made my life, despite my own inadequacy. The elder’s son had to leave shortly after the story. The sun was setting, and he was off to get a goat from his home, to honor us in their way. Ron (a team member) brought to our attention the immense beauty of their offering us this animal- in their current state of affairs, how beautiful were their selfless actions in honor of their community. Essua told us that the men were delighted to honor us in their way. Ron (a team member) brought to our attention the immense beauty of their offering us this animal- in their current state of troubles, how beautiful were their selfless actions in the eyes of God. The elders of the community served us the choicest meat, and we enjoyed each other’s company and laughter. With our bellies full and the sun deep beneath the horizon, some of us went to join the rest of the community to watch the Jesus film dubbed in Turkana.

After the movie, Fr. Martin and the team reflected back on the day. As we stood there, I noticed a few scattered shadows against radiant sand. I asked Fr. Martin what they were, and he replied, “Those are the community leaders who did not go back to their homes [huts made from branches and dried leaves] and instead are sleeping all around our campsite, in order to protect us if any sort of danger should arise.” That night I lay staring at the freckled face of Heaven, tucked in tight by the warm African air. I have never felt safer in my life. At around three in the morning, I woke to the Kangataruk men talking. The discussion sounded very intense at times, and yet every now and then laughter erupted. This is the beautiful dichotomy that embraces the Turkana culture: a seriousness that is always paired with calmness about the events which surround them. They are masters at letting God’s will be done.

**That Night I Lay Staring at the Freckled Face of Heaven, Tucked in Tight by the Warm African Air.**

**A Sacrifice of Love**

The slaughtering of a goat in honor of our company was a great honor for two reasons. Although it is a custom to slaughter a goat as thanksgiving when company arrives, many communities no longer do it because of the number of animals which die, and many that do, do so with antipathy because of their situation. However, the local clergy who understood Turkana told us that the men were delighted to honor us in their way. Ron (a team member) brought to our attention the immense beauty of their offering us this animal- in their current state of troubles, how beautiful were their selfless actions in the eyes of God. The elders of the community served us the choicest meat, and we enjoyed each other’s company and laughter. With our bellies full and the sun deep beneath the horizon, some of us went to join the rest of the community to watch the Jesus film dubbed in Turkana.

After the movie, Fr. Martin and the team reflected back on the day. As we stood there, I noticed a few scattered shadows against radiant sand. I asked Fr. Martin what they were, and he replied, “Those are the community leaders who did not go back to their homes [huts made from branches and dried leaves] and instead are sleeping all around our campsite, in order to protect us if any sort of danger should arise.” That night I lay staring at the freckled face of Heaven, tucked in tight by the warm African air. I have never felt safer in my life. At around three in the morning, I woke to the Kangataruk men talking. The discussion sounded very intense at times, and yet every now and then laughter erupted. This is the beautiful dichotomy that embraces the Turkana culture: a seriousness that is always paired with calmness about the events which surround them. They are masters at letting God’s will be done.

**Friendship and Family**

Fr. Vladimir told us that during the night and early morning, the men were discussing what they had learned from us during the day and the change that they could sense in the Kangataruk’s future. In the morning, our team sat in a circle with the elders. They were ready to give us their final decision about our message about Jesus Christ. When Losekan spoke, he again thanked us for our visit and said that they all liked the knowledge we had brought them. He then began telling us about their fears. They did not want schools being built, because of the threats they bring to their ancient way of life. They know from neighboring tribes that when schools are built, the children abandon their roles and leave their community to live in the towns and cities. The Kangataruk love their ancient lifestyle, and so Losekan also said they did not want physical churches built on their land. Having listened to the elder, Fr. Martin Ritsi spoke on our behalf, saying that we did not come to build schools and that we admire their structure of life. Then, Fr. Martin said that you don’t need a building to pray—you can pray to Jesus Christ anywhere! They clapped when they heard this and threw up their hands with a sea of “Ey’s”. Before, the faces of the men were benevolent, but now they smiled from relief. The men told us that they would miss us and that a bigger welcome would await us upon our return.

Before we left we all prayed together. I stood with the women and children, and Marda and I held hands the whole time. We did morning prayers, and Fr. Martin and Fr. Valdimir offered up petitions for seasonable weather, healing, and protection for the people. They prayed that their livestock be safe and found when lost, that their children be healthy, and that their community grow in love for Christ and neighbor. The “Lord Have Mercy” we sang in Turkana. By the second petition, the women near me were singing “Ekapolon Kisianol” with us. Afterwards, Losekan offered his prayers. His petitions were very similar to ours, his voice certain and fatherly. His arms were like the branches of the trees; with them he blew our prayers up to the heavens and brushed away any bad spirits from our new friendship. He asked God to bless us and our families in our land. Essua also offered up prayers after his father. His prayers thanked Jesus Christ for sending us and for Christ to be with them always. As we were leaving, I realized that Marda and I were still holding on to each other. She looked at me and pointed in the distance, then made a beckoning call towards us and then pointed to the small distance between our bodies. I teared as I told her that “God-willing I will be back soon.” Although she did not understand my words, she nodded and smiled, because she knew what I meant. I looked up at the people of the Kangataruk community and saw them through a blur of wetness. Only as I sat in the truck to drive away did the tears finally fall, and I looked back to imprint their image more clearly in my memory, but the huts and the people were already lost to view.
Showers of Love

The Reunion
When we arrived at Nakenya, the second community, we had to wait for a long time for the people to gather. There had been a wedding, and many people from Turkana had gathered together, but near mid-afternoon people slowly began arriving. I was sitting with my team members when my heart saw Marda before my eyes even had the chance. I rushed to embrace her, and we stayed by each other's side until the sunset. Losekan was also there, and he let out a chuckle. The only things I could think at that moment while walking with Marda to greet Losekan were: Glory be to God, and if a lion could laugh, it would sound like Losekan.

During the dinner that night, our team experienced the greatest miracle of all. Losekan got up to speak. In the dark of the night I could not see him, but I saw him vividly in my memory, painted with his beautiful voice. He told the men of Nakenya that he and his community did not welcome us at first, but they doubted our reasons for coming. He said, “We thought, ‘Who would come from such a faraway land just to be with us and teach us?’ We doubted, and we were wrong. They bring a good message from God. If you are wise, you will listen to them. They are our friends, and we love them.” I sat there under the mysterious shower of Losekan’s words thinking about the work of the Holy Spirit. He loved us, we loved him, and together we experienced the love of God for all of humanity. It was an experience beyond metaphors and physical sensation, a connecting of souls, a returning to Paradise hand-in-hand. I hardly said a word for the rest of the night.

I left the group early because all my body and mind could do was thank God for showing me family I did not know I had. As I lay in my tent a battle went on in my mind. I asked myself, how can this be? This experience seems too holy and boundless for me to possess in my memory. It all seems like a dream, or a made-up story. Who will ever believe me or be able to see it or feel it as I do now? I fell asleep balancing thoughts of love and prayers; then the wind woke me, during that mysterious time which the sun and the moon fight to claim.

He loved us, we loved him, and together we experienced the love of God for all of humanity.

Conclusion
When we met the Turkana people, they lived and worshiped in the spirit of the Old Testament without knowing it. We witnessed their purity of heart, and it was evident that God was intimately near them. Perhaps that is why these loving people rejoiced with the news of the New Testament; they knew that God had revealed more of Himself to them because He loves them—because He wants them to know Him more fully. When I attend church now it is a different experience for me; each time I feel like I walk back onto the dry riverbeds of Turkana. I feel connected to my family there. Many things in my life will never be the same because of the love I felt in Africa. Many things have gained new meaning for me. For example, when the priest prays, “For this community, and for every city and community...” I think of those four villages in Africa, each one with a distinctive and sacred story. When he raises his voice up to the Lord, praying, “For temperate seasons, favorable weather, and an abundance of the fruits of the earth...” I know now the weight that petition holds, and I pray with my friends in Africa, and all over the world, who need prayers for kinder weather. When I have a free moment I think about Essua and briskly run to learn more about Christ, because it is not just about me. I am connected to the world, and I need to learn about my God as fervently as Essua did. I need to constantly share the light of Christ like Losekan had. I have tangibly learned that Christ gave us the world and each other so that we can show one another the universal love and Love of Mankind—otherwise it all seems very lonely.
Teaching
Offer a living witness of Orthodoxy through evangelism, religious education, seminars, bible studies, and retreats. Share the Orthodox Faith with youth, adults, catechumens, clergy, ministry leaders, and the faithful. Clergy, students, teachers, seminarians, youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, and Bible study leaders are urged to apply.

Evangelism
Preach the Gospel of Christ through evangelism in cross-cultural environments, offering the opportunity to hear and embrace the Good News. Live as Orthodox witnesses so others may come to know the saving love of Christ.

Construction
Provide labor and service on a building project while working with members of a local Orthodox community to help construct churches in growing Orthodox communities. Construction experience is welcomed, but not necessary.

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

• Complete a Mission Team application with recommendation from an Orthodox priest
• Participants are expected to cover costs of their participation and travel.
• Members must travel on the scheduled Team dates.

Contact
Inquire at OCMC regarding:
• Sponsorship opportunities: OCMC projects need financial support for church construction, youth camps, seminars, medical supplies, other (bibles, translators, field personnel), and support for OCMC Mission Team members
• Parish mission team projects
• Family and youth participation
• Seminarian scholarships
• Additional mission team opportunities

Information and applications online at www.ocmc.org. Contact: 1-877-GO.FORTH (463-6784), E-mail teams@ocmc.org.

Apply Today!

OCMC MISSION MAGAZINE • FALL 2013

ORTHODOX MISSION TEAMS 2014

Alaska • Albania • Ghana • Guatemala • Kenya • Moldova • Tanzania • Uganda

Share in a Journey of Faith...

All Orthodox Christians seeking to share in a journey of faith and fulfill the mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ are invited to participate on OCMC Orthodox Mission Teams.

Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share...
—1 Timothy 6:18

Young Camp
Serve as an example of God’s love by engaging youth around the world through offering religious education, bible studies, sports, arts and crafts, teaching activities, camps, and fellowship. Those willing to work with youth and young adults are encouraged to apply - camp counselors, teachers, youth ministry directors, and students.

Health Care
Provide a holistic witness of the Gospel by ministering to physical needs and offering health education in regions where medical services are scarce. Health personnel - doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, counselors, HIV/AIDS specialists, therapists - are especially needed.

Youth Camp
Serve as an example of God’s love by engaging youth around the world through offering religious education, bible studies, sports, arts and crafts, teaching activities, camps, and fellowship. Those willing to work with youth and young adults are encouraged to apply - camp counselors, teachers, youth ministry directors, and students.

Health Care
Provide a holistic witness of the Gospel by ministering to physical needs and offering health education in regions where medical services are scarce. Health personnel - doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, counselors, HIV/AIDS specialists, therapists - are especially needed.

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

• Complete a Mission Team application with recommendation from an Orthodox priest
• Participants are expected to cover costs of their participation and travel.
• Members must travel on the scheduled Team dates.

Contact
Inquire at OCMC regarding:
• Sponsorship opportunities: OCMC projects need financial support for church construction, youth camps, seminars, medical supplies, other (bibles, translators, field personnel), and support for OCMC Mission Team members
• Parish mission team projects
• Family and youth participation
• Seminarian scholarships
• Additional mission team opportunities

Information and applications online at www.ocmc.org. Contact: 1-877-GO.FORTH (463-6784), E-mail teams@ocmc.org.

Apply Today!

OCMC MISSION MAGAZINE • FALL 2013

ORTHODOX MISSION TEAMS 2014

Alaska • Albania • Ghana • Guatemala • Kenya • Moldova • Tanzania • Uganda

Share in a Journey of Faith...

All Orthodox Christians seeking to share in a journey of faith and fulfill the mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ are invited to participate on OCMC Orthodox Mission Teams.

Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share...
—1 Timothy 6:18

Young Camp
Serve as an example of God’s love by engaging youth around the world through offering religious education, bible studies, sports, arts and crafts, teaching activities, camps, and fellowship. Those willing to work with youth and young adults are encouraged to apply - camp counselors, teachers, youth ministry directors, and students.

Health Care
Provide a holistic witness of the Gospel by ministering to physical needs and offering health education in regions where medical services are scarce. Health personnel - doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, counselors, HIV/AIDS specialists, therapists - are especially needed.

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

• Complete a Mission Team application with recommendation from an Orthodox priest
• Participants are expected to cover costs of their participation and travel.
• Members must travel on the scheduled Team dates.

Contact
Inquire at OCMC regarding:
• Sponsorship opportunities: OCMC projects need financial support for church construction, youth camps, seminars, medical supplies, other (bibles, translators, field personnel), and support for OCMC Mission Team members
• Parish mission team projects
• Family and youth participation
• Seminarian scholarships
• Additional mission team opportunities

Information and applications online at www.ocmc.org. Contact: 1-877-GO.FORTH (463-6784), E-mail teams@ocmc.org.

Apply Today!

OCMC MISSION MAGAZINE • FALL 2013

ORTHODOX MISSION TEAMS 2014

Alaska • Albania • Ghana • Guatemala • Kenya • Moldova • Tanzania • Uganda

Share in a Journey of Faith...

All Orthodox Christians seeking to share in a journey of faith and fulfill the mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ are invited to participate on OCMC Orthodox Mission Teams.

Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share...
—1 Timothy 6:18

Young Camp
Serve as an example of God’s love by engaging youth around the world through offering religious education, bible studies, sports, arts and crafts, teaching activities, camps, and fellowship. Those willing to work with youth and young adults are encouraged to apply - camp counselors, teachers, youth ministry directors, and students.

Health Care
Provide a holistic witness of the Gospel by ministering to physical needs and offering health education in regions where medical services are scarce. Health personnel - doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, counselors, HIV/AIDS specialists, therapists - are especially needed.

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

• Complete a Mission Team application with recommendation from an Orthodox priest
• Participants are expected to cover costs of their participation and travel.
• Members must travel on the scheduled Team dates.

Contact
Inquire at OCMC regarding:
• Sponsorship opportunities: OCMC projects need financial support for church construction, youth camps, seminars, medical supplies, other (bibles, translators, field personnel), and support for OCMC Mission Team members
• Parish mission team projects
• Family and youth participation
• Seminarian scholarships
• Additional mission team opportunities

Information and applications online at www.ocmc.org. Contact: 1-877-GO.FORTH (463-6784), E-mail teams@ocmc.org.

Apply Today!
I see missions as an expression of love towards our neighbor. As Christians we have been given a great treasure in the knowledge of God’s love for us.
How do I see missions today? I see missions as a calling and as an imperative. I see missions as a fulfillment of the purpose of the Church. I see missions as an expression of love towards your neighbor and as a source of renewal for the Church. I see missions as the very lifeblood of the Church.

I would like to start by talking about the imperative aspect of missions. I feel that too often we forget that our calling to be missionaries is not simply a request but rather it is a command! If we read the Great Commission in Matthew 28 we see that Christ uses the word *mathitevsate*. *Mathitevsate* is the imperative aorist active 2nd person plural from the word *mathitevo* which means:

- Be or become a pupil or disciple
- Make a disciple of, teach.

This is significant in the fact that not only is Jesus asking us to make disciples of all nations, but He is commanding us that it is our duty to perform this sacred act. The verb is not singular, but plural; it is not subjunctive, but imperative. This is a commandment given to us by Christ. This is a commandment that must be fulfilled if we are to truly call ourselves the Church. Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos) of Albania tells us that to forget this commandment, to forget this outward focus of our calling, creates a hollow shell of an institution. He says, “Church without mission is a contradiction in terms...if the Church is indifferent to the apostolic work with which she has been entrusted, she denies herself, contradicts herself and her essence, and is a traitor [to] the warfare in which she is engaged.”
A static Church which lacks a vision and a constant endeavor to proclaim the Gospel to the oikoumene (world) could hardly be recognized as the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church to whom the Lord entrusted the continuation of His work.” I agree. We are commanded by Christ to be missionaries, and without our acceptance of this commandment, we cannot call ourselves the Church. Without our acceptance of this commandment, we have not fulfilled our purpose as the Church. St. Athanasius wrote, “The Word was made man, in order that man might be made divine.” Let me ask a question. How is man to be deified? How is man to achieve theosis if he does not know God? Being missionary means bringing the Good News of the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of Christ to those who have not heard it!

I see missions as tradition. From its very beginnings, the Church has strived to fulfill the Great Commission. History has seen an impossibly small group of believers localized in an oppressed region of the Roman Empire spread throughout the world and become the largest religion of the planet. The Church has been able to do this through the lives of its missionaries and the work of the Holy Spirit. The stories of people such as the Apostle Paul; Sts. Cyril and Methodius, teachers of the Slavs; St. Nicholas of Japan; and St. Innocent, Apostle to America should provide inspiration and guidance for us today as we strive to continue the work given to us and to them by Christ.

I see missions as an expression of love towards our neighbor. As Christians we have been given a great treasure in the knowledge of God's love for us. To have such a treasure and to hoard it is to be selfish and parochial instead of loving and kind. We have been given the gift of eternal life by Christ’s sacrifice. We have been given the chance to reunite ourselves to God. This...
message that has been given to us is truly a life-changing message, however, this message is not a self-help message where we hear the word of God and are fixed. Rather, this message is a completely radical call to a way of life that involves living according to the two greatest commandments. As we read in the Gospel of Matthew, Christ tells us, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

This love of God and love of neighbor involves sharing with them the Good News we have been blessed to receive, this most valuable treasure we have, and offering them the choice to in turn answer the call of Christ. As Peter was told, to love Christ means to feed His sheep!4

Finally, I see missions as a source of renewal and growth for the Church. Without growth and renewal, things decay. Look at nature. Mountains are constantly under siege by the force of the elements. If they are not growing, they are slowly falling. Rivers are constantly emptying themselves, and without new rain and snowmelt, they would dry up. Hurricanes, without new moisture drawn from the warm ocean waters, dwindle and dissipate. As soon as the status quo becomes normative, decay begins. Missions is the way that the Church grows and thereby sustains itself. Missions brings in new ways to view God from different cultural lenses that receive and then interpret the Gospel. Each culture in which Christianity has been incarnated offers back to the Church a richer and fuller understanding of God through the adding of its own vision and particular situation.

In conclusion, I see missions as an intrinsic part of being a Christian. It is a commandment given to us by Christ. We must not allow ourselves to remain focused solely on our own needs and wants so that we do forget to help the other. The Church has a rich tradition of missions that we should look to for inspiration and guidance. If we do not fulfill this call to missions, we are not truly loving the other, and the Church will become a façade that will crumble.

1. BGM Morphology and Gingrich Dictionary, Bible Works
2. In his work “On the Incarnation of the Word”
4. John 21:15-17
Missionary Updates

ALBANIA

Anastasia Pamela Barksdale

Anastasia Pamela Barksdale, now in her 6th year of long-term missionary service in Albania, wears many hats. In addition to teaching Christian education and supervising field placements at the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy, she is also the missionary liaison to the Children’s Home of Hope located at Shen Vlash Monastery. In this capacity, she organizes an OCMC short-term mission team every year and this fall will begin to offer life skills workshops for the teenagers who will leave the Home for residential high schools and vocational schools.

Anastasia continues to work with His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios at the Archdiocese of Tirana and to be active in campus ministry. Anastasia plans to continue her mission service with an additional two-year commitment at the end of her 2014 assignment. She will be traveling and speaking in the USA, again offering missions seminars and workshops in the spring of 2014. Anastasia envisions missions as an organic and holistic process that begins with evangelism, then progresses to catechesis and spiritual formation. Evangelism from a missionary perspective is a unique and necessary component of Christian education, and a blending of all three aspects must be present in order to not only share the good news, but to build up the body of Christ. Please contact Anastasia through the OCMC web site if you would like her to speak to your parish in the spring of 2014.

Pres. Georgia Bendo

Archbishop Anastasios appointed Pres. Georgia Bendo director of Protagonists School in June. It is a big responsibility, but after 9 years of teaching there, she looks forward to serving the school in this new way. On the feast-day of the Ascension Dcn. Anastas was ordained a priest. Dcn. Anastas and Pres. Georgia felt so much joy at being granted this great blessing. In July their third child, Maria Roxana, was born. September marks the beginning of Pres. Georgia’s 10th year in Albania. Please keep the Bendos in your prayers as they get used to their new roles.

Nathan and Gabriela Hoppe

Nathan and Gabriela Hoppe have had a very active summer with numerous camping programs and summer teams. June began with a group of seminarians on the Orthodox Missions Institute team led by Fr. Luke Veronis. The first two weeks of July, Nathan led a residential camp for 100 boys age 10-13. Immediately following this, the Hoppes led the second-ever family camp in the Orthodox Church of Albania. A short-term team from the US joined them for this camp, whose theme was “Living the Liturgy”. Though the camp had special challenges, like no water in the hotel for much of the time and a stomach virus that passed between family members, many of
the campers expressed their appreciation for the event. The Hoppes spent most of August leading a group in Kosovo, which held camps in six schools for about 1400 children. The theme of this year’s camp was “Wise Choices”, which was well-received by the children and school administrators. Immediately after the Kosovo camps, Nathan was responsible for two international events held at the Shen Vlash Monastery. The first was an international conference between the Lausanne movement and the Orthodox churches around the world on the theme of missions. The second was an Orthodox Mission Network meeting, bringing individuals involved in Orthodox missions from numerous countries together to discuss their work. Immediately following this conference Nathan traveled to Romania for a one-week conference regarding the YBC program, which is an Orthodox catechism curriculum being published in numerous countries. The Hoppes have also begun working with the staff that they are responsible for in children’s, adolescent, and university ministry to prepare programs for the new academic year.

Dr. Jeffrey and Caryn Macdonald

Dr. Jeffrey and Caryn Macdonald and their children have found housing in the village of Shen Vlash next to the Holy Resolution Tuesday. They are working on learning Albanian in preparation for teaching at the Academy. Alexander and Anna helped at the OCMC-sponsored camp held at the Home of Hope in June. The following week, Anna and Elizabeth attended a week-long girls’ camp in Elbasan, Anna as an assistant and Elizabeth as a camper. In the first week of September, Andrew had the opportunity to attend a camp held at the monastery for the children of the village of Shen Vlash.

Stephanos and Alexandria Ritsi

After arriving in Albania on Holy Tuesday, the Ritsis traveled around Albania with the Orthodox Mission Institute (OMI) team led by Fr. Luke Veronis, where they familiarized themselves with the country, connected with many of the faithful, and met many Church leaders. This summer, Stephanos and Alexandria served as counselors for the Church’s summer camp program. Alexandria served as a counselor for 5 young girls. Two of her campers were baptized into the Orthodox Church! As counselor at the boy’s camp, Stephanos led the camping adventure program. Every night of camp, one cabin would get to climb the hill above the camp and come together for a campfire where he and the campers would talk about stewardship of the environment as well as read a psalm and spend time singing and telling jokes before spending the night in tents. For most of the boys (and the other counselors) this was their first camping experience.

After the boys and girls camps, the Ritsis joined the OCMC/Center for Family Care (CFC) Family Camp short-term mission team led by Panayiotis and Shannon Sakellariou in Voskopoje, where they were able to work with the Hoppe family to help Orthodox families come together to learn about the Faith and grow in fellowship.

Stephanos and Alexandria are now preparing for the coming year’s events. Stephanos now has an office in the new Metropolitan building and will be working with Jani Meni in the youth office under Bishop Asti. Alexandria will be teaching English, Character Education, and Catechism at the Protagonist School. She is excited to get back into the classroom and teach. She will also teach Character Education at the Home of Hope at Shen Vlash. Both Stephanos and Alexandria have begun their language studies, using the Growing Participator Approach (GPA) under the guidance of Dr. Michael Colburn. They are trying to learn as much of the language and culture as they can!

GUATEMALA

Fr. John and Presbytera Alexandra Chakos

Fr. John and Presbytera Alexandra Chakos have temporarily returned from Guatemala after six months laboring in the field while residing at Sts. Peter and Paul Seminary, the center of their missionary activity. Established with the purpose of raising up and training future priests, catechists, and leaders, the seminary’s immediate focus remains on resourcing, training, and supporting the 8 priests and hundreds of catechists who currently serve over 150,000 faithful in the 330 parishes under the Metropolis of Mexico. Presbytera Sandy continues to teach young women to sew, and to train them in making the needed liturgical garments and coverings, while also supporting young seminarians and clergy wives.

Before their departure from the field, the first OCMC construction team was received at the seminary to assist in building an additional dormitory. In the next six months, the Chakos mission continues here in the States by their making presentations and gathering support and resources for their work in the ripe field of Guatemala. In this time, Fr. John remains at work, administrating efforts as field leader from afar and returning as necessary.

Fr. David and Matushka Roxanne Rucker

The Ruckers have launched out in faith to become Mission Specialists in order to help teach newly-received Orthodox believers in over 300 villages in Guatemala and Mexico and to help train their leaders. The first priority, according to the commission of our Lord and the tradition of our Church, is to “teach the things you have learned to others, who will be able to teach...
others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). Since February, they have had the privilege of speaking in parishes, at a youth camp, at Project Mexico, and at diocesan events across the country, encouraging faithful believers in North America through sharing what God is doing among our southern neighbors in Guatemala and Mexico.

In September, Fr. David and Matushka Rozanne arrived in Guatemala to begin learning the language, living in the culture, and loving people as they assist in the establishment of Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox Seminary, the first Orthodox seminary in Central America.

**MONGOLIA**

Kurt Bringerud

Kurt Bringerud was married on July 14th to Marina, a faithful member of Holy Trinity parish in Ulaan Baatar, who was born and raised in Mongolia. From near and far, family members and friends gathered for the wedding during the centuries-old festival of Naadam. Their marriage opens unexpected doors to be of good witness as a family to the local Church and community. Kurt continues teaching English through a private institution that offers classes to adults and high school students, while also teaching Japanese to a small group of students. His work provides a natural network of socialization in which relational evangelism naturally takes place.

**MOLDOVA**

Christina Semon

This summer Christina Semon completed her missionary service in Moldova after having helped the Church to establish a vibrant self-sustaining youth ministry. She looks forward to getting some rest after her years in the field, but also continuing her education where she will complete studies in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). In this time she will pray for personal discernment regarding the path her life will take next, including the possibility of future missionary service.

**ROMANIA**

Floyd and Ancuta Frantz

In the spring, the Frantzes received a substantial donation and an Agape grant through OCMC. Together these were enough for them to jumpstart new activities at the long-term care psychiatric hospital in Borsa and at the Tb hospital in Savadisla. There is new vitality in the work being done in these hospitals; there are now three full-time staff members at the hospital in Savadisla and increased activities at the long-term care psychiatric hospital in Borsa.

Through the St. Dimitrie Program, Floyd and his staff have maintained the outpatient counseling program and the drop-in center dedicated to addressing issues of substance abuse in Cluj. They hope to re-start the parish programs later this year. Preoteasa Laura Popovic is back on staff after her return from maternity leave.

Three former counseling patients from Alba Iulia (about 50 miles from Cluj) asked for help in finding a space for AA meetings in Alba. Floyd contacted Archbishop Irineu about their request, and he gave them a very nice space and assigned a priest, Fr. Ignat, to help them as needed. He also asked Floyd to work with Fr. Ignat to establish a counseling program based on the St. Dimitrie model. The AA group has been meeting since June, and Floyd has begun to train priests for working with alcohol-dependent persons in the parishes. In Moldova, Floyd continues to work with Fr. Iulian to train priests in dealing with substance abuse as he is able.

Ancuta continues her work at the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center with some 36 families that are at risk of abandoning their children because of poverty or other life problems. She has done a wonderful job in developing her own counseling programs for the mothers and maintains the 10-bed daycare center for the at-risk infants. In addition, she continues to give weekly food packages to the families in the program.

**TANZANIA**

James and Daphne Hargrave

On March 17th, 2013, James and Daphne Hargrave welcomed their son, Peter Henry, into the world. He was baptized by Fr. Paul Kagoma at St Nicholas Chapel in Mwanza on June 16th, 2013, with Mr. Derick Paul Mattern as his godfather. In September, the Hargraves returned to North America so James could pursue a theological education. They hope to return to the mission field after James completes his theological graduate degree.

Maria Roeber

Maria Roeber returned to the United States this past spring and is beginning a graduate program in nurse-midwifery at Frontier Nursing University this fall. She is also continuing to work with the OCMC missionary department to help recruit and train future long-term missionaries. Maria hopes to return to the mission field as a nurse-midwife after completing her studies and is excited to have the opportunity to encourage others as they pursue their calling to missionary work.

Felice Stewart

Felice Stewart completed her service in Tanzania and is now serving as a Mission Specialist with OCMC in the area of addictions treatment and counseling ministry. Before returning, she worked alongside OCMC Missionary Floyd Frantz for more than 4 months, during which she helped start a women’s AA group at the Policlinica St. Panteleimon, and she was very involved in the women’s prison mission.

In Romania, she also started a Women’s 12 Step Recovery program. She will be further assisting St. Dimitrie-related programs in various countries in the future as requested by OCMC.
Finding Kenya at a Coffee Hour in Virginia:
Parishes at Home Supporting Priests Abroad

by Markella Balasis

Coffee Hour: that rather innocuous time following the Divine Liturgy, with people sitting at their regular tables, eating their usual cookies with their coffee, and catching up on the week’s events. One parish in Virginia, though, decided to depart from the norm and try a creative approach to promote missions awareness through the Support a Mission Priest program.

The Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) program is dear to the hearts of many. Each one of us has likely witnessed glimpses of the emotional and spiritual struggles of an Orthodox priest serving in North America. Add the financial struggles of living in a developing country on top of that, and it is not difficult to picture what the life of a mission priest overseas must be like. Supporters find it easy to relate to the lives of these priests, and SAMP offers a unique opportunity to participate in their pastoral ministry.

This year, the parish of St. Raphael of Brooklyn in Chantilly, Virginia, decided to support a priest through SAMP and begin engaging in the ministry of the OCMC. St. Raphael’s, a parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Diocese of Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic, was established in 2006 to serve the growing population of northern Virginia. After becoming involved in several outreach programs through a local family shelter, St. Raphael’s, through the guidance of parish priest Fr. Thomas Palke and OCMC Ambassador Paula Massouh, wished to expand their outreach to the international level. Paula explained, “Since St. Raphael’s has a number of Ethiopian members, sponsoring a mission priest in [neighboring] Kenya not only provided the parishioners with the ability to associate with that part of the world, but also to expose them to the missionary work in that area.”

Mission Sunday, March 17, 2013, was the culmination of a months-long effort at St. Raphael’s to raise support for a mission priest in Kenya. In the weeks leading up to Mission Sunday, parishioners were encouraged to offer donations in order to reach $600 to fully sponsor one Kenyan priest for one year. Immediately the parish embraced this project; with more than three weeks to go before the event, they had already raised the $600 goal! They learned that they would be supporting the ministry of Fr. Vladimir Paul Lonyuduk in the Turkana region of Kenya.

The parish’s Mission and Outreach Committee pursued a way for parishioners to connect with the SAMP program and share on a personal level. Since the parish had set their sights on a priest from Kenya, everything about Mission Sunday was centered on the Kenyan theme. Paula sought out a Kenyan restaurant nearby to provide some of the food for the coffee hour, and individual parishioners brought other offerings of traditional East African foods. The social hall was even decked out with Kenyan flag decorations.

Following the Divine Liturgy on Mission Sunday, SAMP Coordinator Markella Balasis spoke to elaborate on the SAMP program, introduce the mission priest whom they will be sponsoring, and thank them for their enthusiasm and generosity. During the coffee hour, as parishioners enjoyed the African fare that had been lovingly prepared for them, they learned that another surprise was in store for them. They were able to view “A Journey of Faith,” a short film highlighting the recent efforts of the OCMC in the Turkana area of Kenya, which features their very own SAMP priest, Fr. Vladimir Paul Lonyuduk! This encounter especially touched people, for they were able to witness their own SAMP priest in action. As Paula noted, “Members were not only delighted to see him in the DVD, but very impressed by the missionary efforts portrayed.”

SAMP seems to have a special way of inspiring people with enthusiasm for missions. Not too far away from St. Raphael’s in Virginia, one young boy in Maryland took it upon himself that, one Sunday following the Divine Liturgy, he would walk around to people and ask for contributions to go to a mission priest; by the end of the day, he had raised $50 - enough to support a SAMP priest for a full month! In southern California, several communities band together each year to raise support for missions through a Mission Walk. This year’s Mission Walk benefited the SAMP program and, as people marched in droves with posters of SAMP priests leading the way, the event ultimately raised support for 10 mission priests. All of these various events capitalized on ways to create a personal connection for people, which captured their attention and drew them to become involved with the ministry of indigenous mission priests.

If you are interested in learning more about the Support a Mission Priest program, please contact Markella Balasis, SAMP Program Coordinator, at 1-877-GO-FORTH, ext. 163, or via e-mail, samp@ocmc.org.

Mission Sunday, March 17, 2013, was the culmination of a months-long effort at St. Raphael’s to raise support for a mission priest in Kenya. In the weeks leading up to Mission Sunday, parishioners were encouraged to offer donations in order to reach $600 to fully sponsor one Kenyan priest for one year. Immediately the parish embraced this project; with more than three weeks to go before the event, they had already raised the $600 goal! They learned that they would be supporting the ministry of Fr. Vladimir Paul Lonyuduk in the Turkana region of Kenya.

The parish’s Mission and Outreach Committee pursued a way for parishioners to connect with the SAMP program and share on a personal level. Since the parish had set their sights on a priest from Kenya, everything about Mission Sunday was centered on the Kenyan theme. Paula sought out a Kenyan restaurant nearby to provide some of the food for the coffee hour, and individual parishioners brought other offerings of traditional East African foods. The social hall was even decked out with Kenyan flag decorations.

Following the Divine Liturgy on Mission Sunday, SAMP Coordinator Markella Balasis spoke to elaborate on the SAMP program, introduce the mission priest whom they will be sponsoring, and thank them for their enthusiasm and generosity. During the coffee hour, as parishioners enjoyed the African fare that had been lovingly prepared for them, they learned that another surprise was in store for them. They were able to view “A Journey of Faith”, a short film highlighting the recent efforts of the OCMC in the Turkana area of Kenya, which features their very own SAMP priest, Fr. Vladimir Paul Lonyuduk! This encounter especially touched people, for they were able to witness their own SAMP priest in action. As Paula noted, “Members were not only delighted to see him in the DVD, but very impressed by the missionary efforts portrayed.”

SAMP seems to have a special way of inspiring people with enthusiasm for missions. Not too far away from St. Raphael’s in Virginia, one young boy in Maryland took it upon himself that, one Sunday following the Divine Liturgy, he would walk around to people and ask for contributions to go to a mission priest; by the end of the day, he had raised $50 - enough to support a SAMP priest for a full month! In southern California, several communities band together each year to raise support for missions through a Mission Walk. This year’s Mission Walk benefited the SAMP program and, as people marched in droves with posters of SAMP priests leading the way, the event ultimately raised support for 10 mission priests. All of these various events capitalized on ways to create a personal connection for people, which captured their attention and drew them to become involved with the ministry of indigenous mission priests.

If you are interested in learning more about the Support a Mission Priest program, please contact Markella Balasis, SAMP Program Coordinator, at 1-877-GO-FORTH, ext. 163, or via e-mail, samp@ocmc.org.

Since St. Raphael’s counts several East African families amongst their parishioners, sponsoring a mission priest in Kenya created a special connection for the community.

OCMC Ambassador Paula Massouh and her committee decorated the social hall of St. Raphael’s with Kenyan flags and displays of their SAMP priest to raise awareness of their community’s new SAMP effort.
A presence on social media is a necessity today for spreading the word of Christ and to build on the foundation of missions work around the world. Outlets like Facebook and Twitter make it easier for those unaware of missions to see the work being done in mission fields globally and how they can get involved. Social media outlets are a way of maintaining and strengthening both the new and existing relationships with constituents through two-way communication; one can share work being done and express the needs to be met, plus constituents can instantly respond with both positive and negative feedback to help a cause and message. From recruiting team members to asking for prayers to fulfilling financial goals, social media has become one more piece in the puzzle to help missions around the world to gain attention.

For the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, a presence on social media has helped in spreading awareness about the work that long-term missionaries and short-term teams are doing globally. Social media makes it easier for those who already know about missions to keep up with the work being done, but it also makes it easier for those who don't know about missions work to find us, see the deeds being done in Christ’s name, and become a supporter in a matter of minutes. It is important, however, for the Internet and the influence that can come from it to not just be tools used to spread awareness; that awareness has to lead to action.

Social media provides a new channel for fundraising that OCMC had yet to tap into until earlier this year. With the reach, audience, and support in place, OCMC
utilized what was already there in a new and exciting way when we launched our first-ever social media fundraising campaign. In February and March of 2013, we asked our nearly 5,000 Facebook fans at the time to help raise $2,500 for medicines to be administered by the Resurrection of Christ Health Centre in Bukoba. The campaign ran for about a month and raised over $6,000 thanks to this new, innovative way to appeal to our support base for the organization’s fundraising needs. In the fall of 2013, a team will be serving in Tanzania to further address the great need for healthcare that exists there.

Half of the money raised came in through a combined effort from both offline and online influences, highlighting the importance of diversifying influence. The online appeal was seen by a couple of people who brought the fundraising effort to the attention of their parish priest. He chose to share this with the entire parish and asked them to support the fundraiser. Together, the parishioners raised $3,000 for Tanzania medicines.

In addition to the fundraising results, we were very excited that the amount of awareness about OCMC grew thanks to the campaign. Our Facebook page gained over 400 new followers during the month that the campaign ran, and nearly 50% of the donations to the campaign came from first-time givers. These are the numbers that really highlight the importance of a concise, compelling message in the work being done online to spread awareness and inspire action.

Looking forward, OCMC will continue utilizing social media outlets to spread awareness, gain supporters, and fundraise. Twice per year, we will be complementing other print fundraising efforts with ones on social media. This October, our second social media fundraising appeal for 2013 will be running on Facebook and Twitter as we aim to raise $2,400 for our Support a Mission Priest program. $50 per month is enough to assist a priest in the work of spreading Orthodoxy while they help build up their local churches, teach the Orthodox faith to the growing communities, and become self-sustaining.

To join us on Facebook, you can find us at www.facebook.com/OrthodoxChristianMissionCenter. On Twitter, we can be found at https://twitter.com/ocmc.

Charitable IRA Rollover - Available Through 2013

The Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) is pleased to make information available to you as a steward of all God has entrusted to your care. The current tax law might allow you to fulfill your current pledge or make an offering to the Orthodox Christian Mission Center that would make a significant difference. If you have been blessed to have reached 70 ½ years in age, you may be able to make a tax-free gift of up to $100,000 to the OCMC from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA). If you have any questions, or would like additional information, please contact:

Penny Petropoul, Major Gifts Officer • penny@ocmc.org • Phone: 877-GO-FORTH (463-6784), Ext. 160

Our Facebook page gained over 400 new followers during the month that the campaign ran.

The 2014 Lesson Plan & Coin Box Program

 Cultivate the Faith in the hearts of the young people of your parish, and connect them with their Orthodox brothers and sisters throughout our world through participation in the annual OCMC Coin Box and Lesson Plan Program! Each year, Sunday Schools and youth groups across North America take time during the spring Lenten season to focus on missions and raise money for the vital work of serving as Christ’s witnesses “to the ends of the Earth” (Acts 1:8).

In 2014, OCMC will continue to build the foundation of new ministries reaching thousands of inquiring, as well as newly-baptized Orthodox Christians, in northern Guatemala and southern Mexico. 2014 Lesson Plans will focus on these ministries, and all support raised through the 2014 Coin Box and Lesson Plan Program will benefit the training and preparation of those missionaries and go toward supporting and developing the ministry that will serve these brothers and sisters in this region. If your parish is not currently part of this annual program, please consider joining it in 2014! You do not have to wait until next year to reserve your lesson plans and coin boxes now; please contact Phyllis Skinner at 904-829-5132, ext. 164 or at coinbox@ocmc.org.
We ask for your prayers and an offering of monthly financial support as OCMC missionaries and ministries assist the growing Orthodox Church around the world. For example, among the Turkana of northern Kenya, OCMC has participated in the catechism and baptism of hundreds of our newly-illumined brothers and sisters in Christ! However, there are thousands more that have yet to hear the Gospel in this region, and millions throughout the world.

OCMC is able to recruit, train, and send those who can share the Faith only because you have made international Orthodox missions part of your personal ministry. Please prayerfully consider making OCMC part of your monthly financial stewardship using the envelope included in this issue.