TURN TO CHRIST:
MINISTERING TO THE YOUTH OF ALBANIA

ALSO INSIDE: 2016 Teams | Missionary Updates | Mission News
Miracles of Rain: the Story Continues
Fr. Martin Ritsi

Turn to Christ: Ministering to the youth of Albania
Dn. Stephanos & Dkn. Alexandra Ritsi

Teach Them All I Have Commanded You:
Anastasia Pamela Barkdale

OCMC Missionaries
What It Means to Support a Missionary: Hosea and Tamara Dilullo
Missionary Updates

Orthodox Mission Teams
2016 Team Opportunities
The Strength in Your Sisters’ Shoulders: Pres. Joy-Anna Corona

Mission News
Kenya, Guatemala, Korea

On the cover: His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios gives a younger altar server the Eucharist. As the Orthodox Church in Albania finds itself reestablished, its reach now reaches into many scattered villages. The need for well-trained clergy and lay leaders has never been greater as the Church tries to help the Albanian people grow more deeply in their faith.

OCMC MISSION MAGAZINE • FALL 2015, Volume 31, Number 2

MIRACLES OF RAIN: the Story Continues
by Fr. Martin Ritsi

Will it really happen again, I wondered? Will God reveal Himself again to people through a miraculous event? We have been ministering in the Turkana region of Kenya for the past three years, and it seems to follow us wherever we go. After these baptisms, we learned of four other villages that had no Christian presence. Meetings were arranged. We travelled with an OCMC team of Holy Cross Seminary students and the OCMC Mission Team, meeting with the villagers. By the third visit, the people were ready to accept the Orthodox Faith. God worked miracles by sending prophecies of our coming, in advance and then three years in a row sending rain, during a time of drought, upon our arrival. On the third visit, the people were baptized in a river that had actually filled the night we arrived.
Following that discussion, we went on to the next of the three remaining villages on our tour, but this time the chief of the first village appeared. He spoke on our behalf, telling them to listen to us. One woman, a big skeptic, challenged us to pray to our God for rain. Later, others with genuine hope also asked that we would pray to this God for them. The villages were suffering. Water was scarce. The animals were too thin and the people were hungry. At the end of the day, we knelt in the sand, under the stars, surrounded by the people. We asked the Lord to reveal Himself, to have compassion and to send rain. Before midnight the winds picked up, the clouds rolled in, the temperature dropped and the rain began. It rained so hard that we had to leave because the dry riverbeds would flood and prevent us from getting home.

The next year we returned. Again, we were asked to pray for rain. “It hasn’t rained since your visit last year,” they said. “We are hungry. Please pray to God again for rain.” It rained. In April of this year, we went back for our third visit. In between, there had been visiting and teaching them. This time, I travelled with a team of students from St. Vladimir’s Seminary. As we drove through the bush and wound our way over the sands, the clouds were already beginning to form. Is this really happening? I wondered. Is God preparing again to send showers of compassion and a sign of His presence to validate our teaching?

We gathered under the large meeting tree. There were greetings and singing. Then, a group from the village made a presentation. They had just completed our catechist training lessons in the far away town of Lodwar. They shared some of their experiences. After we left, they would continue to share what they learned. Next, our team began their presentations. I was seated with the elders on a traditional Turkana stool. By my side was the oldest son of the village chief. The winds picked up. The air was getting colder. Then it started. Gently the rain began to fall. The young man began taping my shoulder and pointing to the sky with a big smile on his face. I laughed. I looked up at the sky and said, “No problem, God can no longer doubt us. Our God is strong.”

As the last lesson of our mission team concluded, final remarks were made and we sang and danced together. We brought food so that they can also become an expression of God’s love to the people around them.

Following that discussion, we went on to the next of the three remaining villages on our tour, but this time the chief of the first village appeared. He spoke on our behalf, telling them to listen to us. One woman, a big skeptic, challenged us to pray to our God for rain. Later, others with genuine hope also asked that we would pray to this God for them. The villages were suffering. Water was scarce. The animals were too thin and the people were hungry. At the end of the day, we knelt in the sand, under the stars, surrounded by the people. We asked the Lord to reveal Himself, to have compassion and to send rain. Before midnight the winds picked up, the clouds rolled in, the temperature dropped and the rain began. It rained so hard that we had to leave because the dry riverbeds would flood and prevent us from getting home.

The next year we returned. Again, we were asked to pray for rain. “It hasn’t rained since your visit last year,” they said. “We are hungry. Please pray to God again for rain.” It rained. In April of this year, we went back for our third visit. In between, there had been visiting and teaching them. This time, I travelled with a team of students from St. Vladimir’s Seminary. As we drove through the bush and wound our way over the sands, the clouds were already beginning to form. Is this really happening? I wondered. Is God preparing again to send showers of compassion and a sign of His presence to validate our teaching?

We gathered under the large meeting tree. There were greetings and singing. Then, a group from the village made a presentation. They had just completed our catechist training lessons in the far away town of Lodwar. They shared some of their experiences. After we left, they would continue to share what they learned. Next, our team began their presentations. I was seated with the elders on a traditional Turkana stool. By my side was the oldest son of the village chief. The winds picked up. The air was getting colder. Then it started. Gently the rain began to fall. The young man began taping my shoulder and pointing to the sky with a big smile on his face. I laughed. I looked up at the sky and said, “No problem, God can no longer doubt us. Our God is strong.”

As the last lesson of our mission team concluded, final remarks were made and we sang and danced together. We brought food so that they can also become an expression of God’s love to the people around them.

Following that discussion, we went on to the next of the three remaining villages on our tour, but this time the chief of the first village appeared. He spoke on our behalf, telling them to listen to us. One woman, a big skeptic, challenged us to pray to our God for rain. Later, others with genuine hope also asked that we would pray to this God for them. The villages were suffering. Water was scarce. The animals were too thin and the people were hungry. At the end of the day, we knelt in the sand, under the stars, surrounded by the people. We asked the Lord to reveal Himself, to have compassion and to send rain. Before midnight the winds picked up, the clouds rolled in, the temperature dropped and the rain began. It rained so hard that we had to leave because the dry riverbeds would flood and prevent us from getting home.
Imagine a life where the government has outlawed religion. Imagine a place
where systematic war is waged against the vestiges of religion. Imagine a
place where the youth are taken and forced to demolish churches brick by brick
during school—a place where people are taught the ignorance of religion, the
fallacy of belief. Priests are portrayed as the village idiots throughout the body of films, plays,
and books. The act of whispering the name of Christ has become as illicit as thievery. Instead
of ushering in a utopia of human enlightenment, this promise of “freedom from religion” ushers
in a dystopia of emptiness and hollowness.

But not everything is hopeless. Imagine a
place where a few dedicated individuals keep the
faith through persecutions and imprisonments. Imagine that Communism falls and the Church
is reestablished. The Church experiences a
miraculous Resurrection. Imagine a place that is then beset by a wholly
new series of challenges. The work done by
the government to destroy the Church in the
hearts of the people has caused far-reaching
and long-lasting consequences. Some parents
do not allow their children to go to Sunday
school or young adult events. Daughters are
told they are betraying their family by going to church. Sons
are told the same. At the same time, these struggles from a
past era entwine themselves with an entirely new danger: the
danger of Western secular materialism. The ideals of instant
satisfaction and egocentrism shine as alluring sirens leading
yet again to emptiness and hollowness.

This place is Albania. There is a generation of young adults that is thirsting for
Christ. A generation that understands that society’s answers
have been lacking. That, in reality, it is “love, worship of
God, desire, union with God, and union with the Church
that constitute Paradise on earth” (Wounded by Love 131).
Albania needs youth work to guide this quest that these
young adults have embarked on—a quest that is
exemplified in the lives of two Orthodox young
adults from Tirana whose story we would like to
share with you.

Nikolin Kote is a 25 year old medical student
in Tirana. He is originally from the city of Korça
and was baptized on the 6th of September this
year. His favorite things to do are Latin, ballroom,
and tango dancing, swimming, bicycling, listening
to music, and reading.

How did we get to know Nikolin?
We met Nikolin for the first time at a young
adult meeting at the Cathedral in Tirana. We were struck
that this was a young man who took what he did seriously.
Our relationship with him has grown as time has passed
through his participation in a young adult Bible study we
hold in our house. Nikolin will be a witness to those around
him that being a successful doctor does not exclude the
possibility of being an Orthodox Christian, but rather that
being Orthodox makes a person a better doctor.

Nikolin, what brought you to the Orthodox Church?
I was born in an Orthodox family. When I was younger,
my grandmother would tell me stories from the Bible as if
they were fairy tales. All the stories she told me gave me a
sense of wonder. When I was in high school, they asked me to

**Turn to Christ. Love Him simply and humbly, without any
demand, and He Himself will free you.**
(Wounded by Love 135)
My parents proved to be a great support. When my grandmother died, my parents would go to her funeral, which, if they are not careful, and not being told without a leader and member of the clergy, we are not mature enough to guide ourselves together and serve together representing the Orthodox Church today in Albania.

How would you explain the young adult movement in the Orthodox Church? The Church gives him strength and makes him feel as if he were a child of God. Even though we are Christians, as young adults, we are not mature enough to guide ourselves together and serve together representing the Orthodox Church today in Albania.

How would your life be different without the Church? Without the Church I think I would have been an intellectual atheist. Still a good person, but I fear without the example of Christ, I would have been cold, that is to say, a closed person.

What is the importance of the Orthodox Church in Albania? The Church contains the truth (a whole way of living), which is why so many have found comfort and meaning in the Orthodox Church. The Church is also representing the truth in difficult times and social dilemmas (abortion, peace through religious, stealing, abuse, etc.).

How would your life be different without the Church? Without the Church I think I would have been an intellectual atheist. Still a good person, but I fear without the example of Christ, I would have been cold, that is to say, a closed person.

What is the importance of the Orthodox Church in Albania? The Church contains the truth (a whole way of living), which is why so many have found comfort and meaning in the Orthodox Church.
TEACH THEM ALL THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU...

by Anastasia Pamela Barksdale

The Byzantine mission was based on certain clear-cut and essential principles. At the forefront was a desire to create an authentic local Eucharistic community... The importance attached by Byzantine theology to a life of worship and “divinization” did not prevent direct interest in the social and cultural dimensions of life. Together with the gospel, the Byzantines transcended into their converted peoples the whole of their experience – political, artistic, economic, cultural – permeated by evangelical principles and the Christian vision of life.

“ORTHODOX MISSION: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE,” ARCHBISHOP ANASTASIOS

Education is an integral part of the mission work of the Church. When Jesus Christ entrusted His disciples with the task of sharing the “good news” of salvation with the whole of humanity (Mark 16:15), He understood them to reach out to others, to baptize in the name of the Holy Trinity, and to teach all that He has commanded.

Human spirit. Today, the Orthodox Church continues to experience many trials and tribulations. Recently, the Church has seen the politically sanctioned destruction of parishes and property (Permet, Dhermi and the destruction of the perimeter fencing at the Cathedral in Tirana). Albanians are now, however, a people with hope, a people who know that their God has not abandoned them, a people connected once again to the universal Orthodox Church.

When His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios arrived in Albania, after the country’s nearly 50 years of isolation and extreme hatred of every expression of faith, he found a devastated and destroyed Church; he found a people whose spirit had been broken – ravaged by atheism, brutality, and poverty and a country rife with corruption. Alongside the efforts to rebuild and restore churches and train and educate clergy, there was a need to establish schools, train teachers, print materials, and catechize the people.

His Beatitude sought to rebuild the Orthodox Church in Albania by laying a strong foundation based on “clear-cut and essential” mission principles. 1. Preach the Gospel by translating scripture, liturgical texts, and writings of the Fathers and building churches that “proclaim with the eloquent silence of beauty, that God had come to dwell amongst humanity.” 2. Create authentic local Eucharistic communities that encompassed the language and culture of the evangelized people. 3. Transform the whole of their experience, politics, economics, art, and culture with a Christian vision of life.

Over the past 24 years, by the grace of God and with the help of OCMC Missionaries and Christians around the world, His Beatitude has accomplished wonders. He has established the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy to educate clergy, seminarians, and a 4-year college, Logos, accredited to offer Bachelor’s degrees in numerous fields. Logos also offers affiliate Master’s degree programs with the Universities of Thessaloniki and Piraeus. There are also two vocational schools, a residential dormitory for high school girls, and two residential high schools for boys in Durres and Gjakovac.

In the major cities of Tirana, Korca, and Durres, three private schools for children have also been established: the Protagonists Albanian-American School in Tirana has two campuses and offers classes from kindergarten through high school; the Spirit of Love Albanian-Greek School in Durres for elementary and middle school children; and in Korca an ecclesiastical high school.

There are also 21 preschools operating across the country. In addition to the formal “schools” there are the catechism, youth ministry, kids’ clubs programs, and my own teacher training and field work program at the theological academy.

During the summer months, the Church offers boys’ and girls’ summer camps, as well as day camps. His Beatitude fondly refers to these programs as “spiritual universities.” These camps, held during the month of July, are 10-day overnight camps, staffed by youth leaders and seminary students that provide an opportunity for the young people to live communally in an Orthodox environment – to worship, eat, play together. During the final days of the camp, there are baptisms (with parental consent) for those who are prepared. In the cities and villages, half-day camps are also held throughout the summer, with hundreds of children turning out for an opportunity to learn about God in a fun and yet sacred environment and to be baptized.

As wonderful and moving as all these programs are, even more exciting are the educational programs of Albania...
hopes and dreams for the future. The Church is moving forward with plans for Logos to become a university, with Bachelor’s, Master’s and Ph.D programs, and for the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy to become accredited to provide Bachelor’s degrees in Religious Studies, Teacher Education (to staff the Church’s elementary and preschools), Social Work and premiere English and Greek departments on both campuses.

Today the combined annual educational budget for the Orthodox Autoccephalous Church of Albania is more than $1,000,000 a year. By American standards, this is a relatively modest figure when compared to the cost of an average home in many major metropolitan areas. But for the Orthodox Church of Albania, this is an enormous amount of money. Almost all these institutions depend on donations from abroad. With the worldwide financial crisis, especially in Greece and America, they are struggling to remain open. This year the Church has been forced to close a number of preschools because they lack funding. Churches are nearly always the last to close, but without a source of income, they cannot pay the bills.

Because of the worldwide financial crisis, the worldwide financial crisis, especially in Greece and America, they are struggling to remain open. This year the Church has been forced to close a number of preschools because they lack funding. Churches are nearly always the last to close, but without a source of income, they cannot pay the bills.

Anastasios has been a “holy beggar”, reaching out to Christians around the world that have been very generous. His Beatitude and the faithful here are so grateful for the generosity of our fellow Christians. But we still need help in order not only to survive, but to thrive, and to fulfill the hope for a fully-restored Orthodox presence and society, educated and transformed by God’s love.

OCMC has three specific funds from which donations are transferred monthly to Albania: (1) the Albania Ministry Fund, which helps with operating budgets, scholarship programs, and general needs; (2) OCMC’s Theological Education and Training Assistance Program solicits funds for several seminaries and theological institutions around the world, including the Theological Academy in Albania; (3) the Children’s Home of Hope, an orphanage located at the Shen Vlash Monastery in Durres, which nurtures children ages 4 – 14. Anyone wishing to donate to these programs can make a tax-deductible donation through OCMC designated to one of these specific ministries.

Making a monetary donation is only one way to assist in missions. We can also teach our children to share God’s love by connecting directly with mission communities, missionaries, and programs all over the world. Last year, the Sunday School program at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Worcester, MA, collected and donated school supplies to children in my catechism programs. The gifts brought such joy to the faces of the village children. It was priceless. I am sure the act of sharing also deeply touched the heart of the Body of Christ. Here a young woman is baptized at one of the Church’s girls’ camps.

A new profession you’re planning for, and that means education and preparation. But then there’s the whole course of preparation that precedes a missionary departure to the field, including a program of evaluation and training at the Mission Center, which can take over a year when woven in between your job, your time availability, and your other responsibilities. After all, this isn’t just an extended vacation or trip, it’s a new profession you’re planning for, and that means education and preparation.

What it Means to Support a Missionary

Serving as a missionary can be a pretty daunting vocation. Leaving home, leaving family, leaving friends, leaving your parish, leaving occupations, leaving your country, leaving everything behind and devoting yourself to serving Christ in a foreign land so that others may hear and experience the Gospel.

What it Means to Support a Missionary

by Dr. James Nicholas

What it Means to Support a Missionary

Serving as a missionary can be a pretty daunting vocation. Leaving home, leaving family, leaving friends, leaving your parish, leaving occupations, leaving your country, leaving everything behind and devoting yourself to serving Christ in a foreign land so that others may hear and experience the Gospel.

What it Means to Support a Missionary

by Dr. James Nicholas

Serving as a missionary can be a pretty daunting vocation. Leaving home, leaving family, leaving friends, leaving your parish, leaving occupations, leaving your country, leaving everything behind and devoting yourself to serving Christ in a foreign land so that others may hear and experience the Gospel.

What it Means to Support a Missionary

by Dr. James Nicholas

Serving as a missionary can be a pretty daunting vocation. Leaving home, leaving family, leaving friends, leaving your parish, leaving occupations, leaving your country, leaving everything behind and devoting yourself to serving Christ in a foreign land so that others may hear and experience the Gospel.

What it Means to Support a Missionary

by Dr. James Nicholas

Serving as a missionary can be a pretty daunting vocation. Leaving home, leaving family, leaving friends, leaving your parish, leaving occupations, leaving your country, leaving everything behind and devoting yourself to serving Christ in a foreign land so that others may hear and experience the Gospel.

What it Means to Support a Missionary

by Dr. James Nicholas

Serving as a missionary can be a pretty daunting vocation. Leaving home, leaving family, leaving friends, leaving your parish, leaving occupations, leaving your country, leaving everything behind and devoting yourself to serving Christ in a foreign land so that others may hear and experience the Gospel.

What it Means to Support a Missionary

by Dr. James Nicholas

Serving as a missionary can be a pretty daunting vocation. Leaving home, leaving family, leaving friends, leaving your parish, leaving occupations, leaving your country, leaving everything behind and devoting yourself to serving Christ in a foreign land so that others may hear and experience the Gospel.

What it Means to Support a Missionary

by Dr. James Nicholas

Serving as a missionary can be a pretty daunting vocation. Leaving home, leaving family, leaving friends, leaving your parish, leaving occupations, leaving your country, leaving everything behind and devoting yourself to serving Christ in a foreign land so that others may hear and experience the Gospel.
Perhaps the greatest benefit of supporting missionaries, besides obeying our Lord in responding to His command, is the blessing that results. When people and parishes contribute to ministry beyond their own borders, they find that there is a reciprocal blessing that is multiplied back to them...

“the generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters himself will be watered.” (Proverbs 11:25)

America and engaging them as stakeholders, as partners, in the Great Commission. In fact, most of our missionaries agree that this is one of the most rewarding aspects of mission work. It empowers people to be obedient to Christ’s command to “make disciples of all nations”, from which none of us are exempt. Everyone can join in and, together, we can do it. And, for a missionary, it’s like joining hands with the people, standing in solidarity with them and being sent by them, all the way to the far reaches of the earth. This kind of life is like launching a rocket. Funding a missionary is like fueling that rocket. The fuel that goes into the engine to a foreign field is a genuine spiritual life ‘in Christ’ and he who waters will himself be watered.

ABOVE: OCMC Missionaries Dr. William Black are able to bring a higher level of theological education to the mission field that they can then pass along to others. They, however, cannot serve without the support from the faithful here at home. Anyone may participate: youth, those in school, working in a career, retired, and even children. Sunday school classes, parishes, groups, and societies. Whatever a person is able to give, whether it's a $5 a month or $100 a month, makes a serious impact when added up over time. If an astronaut needs $15,000 for a mission to Mars that will take 5 years, is it easier to expect someone to donate $15,000 cash for the journey, or to ask 25 people to consider contributing $60? The financial result is the same, but more people have engaged in the mission with the second method. And then there is the selfless act of sacrificing for each other in the love of Christ. OCMC Missionary Jesse Brandow, serving in Guatemala, says, “Raising support was rewarding and humbling. I met people who had had job losses or family illnesses, yet they still sent me $20 or twenty dollars every month. Their faith is what carries me through my hardest struggles in the field.”

Perhaps our parishes or organization could invite a missionary to share about their service and its impact on the Church’s outreach and work in another country. OCMC is the international missions and evangelism agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the US. As a pan-Orthodox agency, we have been sending missionaries into the field for thirty years. Their stories and ministry would be glad to share more information about OCMC, their own mission, and what the broader plans are for the country or Archdiocese they will be serving. They will also tell you how you can “join” their mission by supporting them in prayer.

As mentioned before, our missionaries consider donors as stakeholders in their missions, and therefore, they keep them apprised of the progress of their mission. Sharing personal stories of what is happening in the course of their ministry also allows donors an opportunity to enter into prayer with the field, but the connection works both ways according to Missionary Jesse Brandow: “When I first went to Guatemala two priests had been working there under two years, and the partnership of supporters abroad brings comfort to the people. I share pictures of the sacrifices that support me, and I give the priests personal messages from my supporters. The people ‘at home’ share their stories and support with their own future church leaders to ‘make disciples’ as they minister effectively and boldly in their communities.”

We also welcome these services because the Body of Christ, the Church, through the offering of her members, has sent us out. Our Native Alaskan church leaders face daunting challenges in their communities: alcohol, drug and alcohol addiction, suicide, physical and sexual abuse, cultural disintegration, and economic hardships. We welcome opportunities to partner in prayer with our donors, who are integral to the mission. OCMC missionary Dr. William Black recently deployed to Kenya in July to serve as a lecturer at Makarere III in the Orthodox Seminary in Nairobi. Writing in his recent news update, he states, “…a small army of generous Christians and parishes made it possible for me to board the Air France jet on July 20 in Washington and then walk through immigration and customs into the Nairobi night and welcoming embrace of friends from the Orthodox seminary here on July 21. Without you, these missions would not be possible. And lives in other countries may go unchanged.”

His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Albania once wrote, “We cannot live without a genuine spiritual life ‘in Christ’ and worship Him truly if the desire for the salvation of the entire world unite all things in Him, the gathering together in one of all things in Christ” (Eph 1:10), is not burning constantly within us and if this desire is not dually activated in us to spread the Kingdom of God upon earth.”

Our parishes need to be filled with Great Commission Christians who get to know our missionaries, pray for them regularly, and thoughtfully donate toward their missions. Would you consider becoming one of them? The eternal reward far outweighs the earthly cost.

To learn more about Orthodox missionaries serving abroad or to support an OCMC missionary please visit www.ocmc.org, call 877-463-6784 ext. 121, or e-mail missionaries@ocmc.org

Above: Native Alaskan church leaders face daunting challenges in their communities: alcohol, drug and alcohol addiction, suicide, physical and sexual abuse, cultural disintegration, and economic hardships. We welcome opportunities to partner in prayer with our donors, who are integral to the mission. OCMC missionary Dr. William Black recently deployed to Kenya in July to serve as a lecturer at Makarere III in the Orthodox Seminary in Nairobi. Writing in his recent news update, he states, “…a small army of generous Christians and parishes made it possible for me to board the Air France jet on July 20 in Washington and then walk through immigration and customs into the Nairobi night and welcoming embrace of friends from the Orthodox seminary here on July 21. Without you, these missions would not be possible. And lives in other countries may go unchanged.”

Perhaps the greatest benefit of supporting missionaries, besides obeying our Lord in responding to His command, is the blessing that results. When people and parishes contribute to ministry beyond their own borders, they find that there is a reciprocal blessing that is multiplied back to them...
After a much-needed visit with Fr. Anastas and the kids in beautiful Kosovo (northern Albania), we are back and intend to continue our all affairs. Fr. Anastas continues to translate books and celebrate the Divine Liturgy in the Cathedral. Wael’s almost!” You need to start first grade, please. School.定enterm and, Maria turned two years old this summer. We appreciate your prayers!

Afternoon, we planned for the afternoon of Saturday, July 15, 2015. This would be the culmination of the boy’s camp, which Nathan directed this summer; when about 30 of 250 participants from around the world would be expected to attend the camp, it would be held just one hour after breakfast. Rapidly more and more boys fell ill until about one third of the camp was afflicted with serious vomiting. As the summer progressed, the emergency room in Durres and numerous other boys had to be hospitalized for several weeks in the conclave. As never determined for sure what caused this outbreak of illness. Some indications pointed towards food poising and others was unknown. Regardless of the source, the outcome was the speedy disappearance of the camp problem. With sick boys in every camp and group leaders busy providing care for them we had to prepare to open a new program on Saturday and postpone the baptisms. With the help of a few volunteer Ruths, who also had to be taken to the hospital on Sunday afternoon believing that the sudden outbreak of illness was used by the enemy to disrupt this momentous event. Despite the political situation, the boy’s camp was able to be attended and thereafter, all the boys were baptized, including many new transannonians, Martin. Vasili (almost 7) is excited to start first grade at Protagonists of Saturday, July 11, 2015. This would be the 20th year of his life. Earlier year lost their spiritual mentor, Fr. Andres Girón. Yet, the second half of this year is the 10th year anniversary of the Protection of the Theoktistos Family Center (PTFC). Over these years, the PTFC has helped hundreds of young children and their families to live together as a family unit so that they, like the Church, can be at peace, healthy, and productive. The Archdiocese and the local community has recognized the value of the love and support given by this PTFC project. It is seen as a model for setting up similar social work programs both by the national social work community and by local universities, that send students there for practical and studies on the model.

Felix continues working on the AGES Liturgical Workbench, which is a translation management system (TMS) that allows them to continue as healthy and productive citizens. The Archdiocese and the local community has recognized the value of the love and support given by this PTFC project. It is seen as a model for setting up similar social work programs both by the national social work community and by local universities, that send students there for practical and studies on the model.

The next mission of the OCMC team, moving into new quarters. Our location was falling down, so we had to make this change and hope to be blessed by Sts. Cyril and Methodius. There is some remodeling to do but the Archdiocese has agreed to help us in getting the house up to local building codes for use as a day counseling and drop-in center. Metropolitan Tairon, the late Archdiocese, has also informed me that Fr. John and Fr. Mark will be doing our education program for the kids in this monastery. This year, will be helping the local diocese to receive fundraising on its anniversary. We will continue to help with the local diocese, and will include both the liturgical and the non-liturgical activities.

Dr. Michael Colburn attended the OCMC Missionary Conference in Chonburi, Thailand. The children’s books of commemoration during the Paskohma on August 9th. The Divine Liturgy held on the Feast Day of St. Herrman of Alaska concluded the three-day summer missionary conference at the St. Innocent Russian Orthodox Cathedra in Anchorage.

It is a joy to be a part of this 30-year anniversary of the Protection of the Theoktistos Family Center (PTFC). Over these years, the PTFC has helped hundreds of young children and their families to live together as a family unit so that they, like the Church, can be at peace, healthy, and productive. The Archdiocese and the local community has recognized the value of the love and support given by this PTFC project. It is seen as a model for setting up similar social work programs both by the national social work community and by local universities, that send students there for practical and studies on the model.

Tamaš Dill also assists Fr. John Závodo in his work with the children’s books of commemoration during the Paskohma on August 9th. The Divine Liturgy held on the Feast Day of St. Herrman of Alaska concluded the three-day summer missionary conference at the St. Innocent Russian Orthodox Cathedra in Anchorage.

MONGOLIA

Kurt Bringerud

Kurt Bringerud has begun his fourth year in missionary service in Mongolia. He continues teaching the English language at a local institution and using this as a platform for outreach. He is also serving as a Reader at Holy Trinity Church in Ulaanbaatar. And his wife, Maria, is hosting the home Bible study group initially launched by OCMC missionaries Chris and Jen Moso. Please pray for Kurt, that he may have increasing opportunities to build relationships with native Mongolians through which he can share, with them, the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The Moore Family

The Moore family has been led to pursue further education to better equip themselves for career missionary service, and Chris has begun the Master of Divinity program at St. Vladimir’s Seminary in the meantime, they are avoiding their second child in January. As you remember them in prayer, please also remember their clue family in the Mongolian small group that started during their time there, the Moore family, that is, the staff of the PTFC will be replaced in Spring. So, we wish you happy in Hawkins and, gratifying!

MONGOLIA

Kurt Bringerud

Kurt Bringerud has begun his fourth year in missionary service in Mongolia. He continues teaching the English language at a local institution and using this as a platform for outreach. He is also serving as a Reader at Holy Trinity Church in Ulaanbaatar. And his wife, Maria, is hosting the home Bible study group initially launched by OCMC missionaries Chris and Jen Moso. Please pray for Kurt, that he may have increasing opportunities to build relationships with native Mongolians through which he can share, with them, the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The Moore Family

The Moore family has been led to pursue further education to better equip themselves for career missionary service, and Chris has begun the Master of Divinity program at St. Vladimir’s Seminary in the meantime, they are avoiding their second child in January. As you remember them in prayer, please also remember their clue family in the Mongolian small group that started during their time there, the Moore family, that is, the staff of the PTFC will be replaced in Spring. So, we wish you happy in Hawkins and, gratifying!

MONGOLIA

Kurt Bringerud

Kurt Bringerud has begun his fourth year in missionary service in Mongolia. He continues teaching the English language at a local institution and using this as a platform for outreach. He is also serving as a Reader at Holy Trinity Church in Ulaanbaatar. And his wife, Maria, is hosting the home Bible study group initially launched by OCMC missionaries Chris and Jen Moso. Please pray for Kurt, that he may have increasing opportunities to build relationships with native Mongolians through which he can share, with them, the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The Moore Family

The Moore family has been led to pursue further education to better equip themselves for career missionary service, and Chris has begun the Master of Divinity program at St. Vladimir’s Seminary in the meantime, they are avoiding their second child in January. As you remember them in prayer, please also remember their clue family in the Mongolian small group that started during their time there, the Moore family, that is, the staff of the PTFC will be replaced in Spring. So, we wish you happy in Hawkins and, gratifying!

MONGOLIA

Kurt Bringerud

Kurt Bringerud has begun his fourth year in missionary service in Mongolia. He continues teaching the English language at a local institution and using this as a platform for outreach. He is also serving as a Reader at Holy Trinity Church in Ulaanbaatar. And his wife, Maria, is hosting the home Bible study group initially launched by OCMC missionaries Chris and Jen Moso. Please pray for Kurt, that he may have increasing opportunities to build relationships with native Mongolians through which he can share, with them, the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The Moore Family

The Moore family has been led to pursue further education to better equip themselves for career missionary service, and Chris has begun the Master of Divinity program at St. Vladimir’s Seminary in the meantime, they are avoiding their second child in January. As you remember them in prayer, please also remember their clue family in the Mongolian small group that started during their time there, the Moore family, that is, the staff of the PTFC will be replaced in Spring. So, we wish you happy in Hawkins and, gratifying!

MONGOLIA

Kurt Bringerud

Kurt Bringerud has begun his fourth year in missionary service in Mongolia. He continues teaching the English language at a local institution and using this as a platform for outreach. He is also serving as a Reader at Holy Trinity Church in Ulaanbaatar. And his wife, Maria, is hosting the home Bible study group initially launched by OCMC missionaries Chris and Jen Moso. Please pray for Kurt, that he may have increasing opportunities to build relationships with native Mongolians through which he can share, with them, the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The Moore Family

The Moore family has been led to pursue further education to better equip themselves for career missionary service, and Chris has begun the Master of Divinity program at St. Vladimir’s Seminary in the meantime, they are avoiding their second child in January. As you remember them in prayer, please also remember their clue family in the Mongolian small group that started during their time there, the Moore family, that is, the staff of the PTFC will be replaced in Spring. So, we wish you happy in Hawkins and, gratifying!

MONGOLIA

Kurt Bringerud

Kurt Bringerud has begun his fourth year in missionary service in Mongolia. He continues teaching the English language at a local institution and using this as a platform for outreach. He is also serving as a Reader at Holy Trinity Church in Ulaanbaatar. And his wife, Maria, is hosting the home Bible study group initially launched by OCMC missionaries Chris and Jen Moso. Please pray for Kurt, that he may have increasing opportunities to build relationships with native Mongolians through which he can share, with them, the love and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The Moore Family

The Moore family has been led to pursue further education to better equip themselves for career missionary service, and Chris has begun the Master of Divinity program at St. Vladimir’s Seminary in the meantime, they are avoiding their second child in January. As you remember them in prayer, please also remember their clue family in the Mongolian small group that started during their time there, the Moore family, that is, the staff of the PTFC will be replaced in Spring. So, we wish you happy in Hawkins and, gratifying!
To participate, Mission Team Members must...

- Complete an Application and a reference from an Orthodox Priest.
- Be at least 18 years of age; in good physical health; and an active member of the Church. Children may participate on Family teams if at least one parent participates.
- Travel on the scheduled dates.
- Be able to cover team participation costs (preparation materials, orientation, expenses while in the field, including transfers from airport, meals, lodging, and project expenses).

Information

Space is limited. Team dates, costs, locations and project details are subject to change. Contact OCMC for availability for 1 week option. Domestic travel to orientation and international airfare is not included. Team members are encouraged to raise support, create awareness and engage others as participants in the work of missions.

Visit www.ocmc.org for more opportunities, to apply, and to fundraise online.
In Your Sisters’ Shoulders

by Pres.Joy-Anne Corona

“Feel the strength in your sisters’ shoulders,” remarked Pres. Renee Ritsi as she presented the concluding remarks in the Priftereshas’ (Presvyteras’) Retreat gathering at Shen Vlash Seminary in Albania last fall. We had shared a few very full and spiritually uplifting days together, exchanging stories, encouraging one another, teaching the words of gratitude and farewell as we fell into embraces. Turning to the side we placed hands to back, each Presvytera rubbing the shoulders of her counterpart and expressing a few very full and spiritually uplifting days together, exchanging stories, encouraging one another, teaching the words of gratitude and farewell as we fell into embraces.

An inspiring unplanned incident occurred on the first day of our second Retreat. Many of the priftereshas had already made their way to Shen Vlash, but we had not yet begun, because we were waiting for one more group to arrive. Sitting around large tables, taking the verses, the lovely priftereshas picked up from their shoulders—both of those believers in the days of the Orthodox Church, not all of the “icons” were destroyed! Patience and faithfulness and piety, urged our own small group to continue to seek for ourselves spiritual growth and maturity! We each feel so blessed and challenged to return home with a dual purpose—to wholeheartedly serve the communities where God has placed each one of us, and also to pray for and support the Albanian Orthodox Church.

During our time with the Albanian priftereshas, we met women who, like their husbands, family to parishioners, Orthodox community to parishioners, clergy to parishioners, the overall circumstances and the overall circumstances for all Albanians after their recent times of tribulations. Our dollars go “further” there, and every donation is greatly needed. OCMC

During the retreats, His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios shared with us presevyteras, which is true not only for the relationship between husband and wife, but also for our Orthodox Christian communities at large: “You are stronger in communion than privately.” Let us all take these words to heart, seeking to foster and grow in communion with each other, clergy to parishioners, Orthodox community to Orthodox community, jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and American Orthodox to all of the Orthodox Church throughout the world. In this way, the “strength in our shoulders” grows so that the Light of Christ may be spread throughout the entire world, to His Glory!

HIs Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios shared that the OCMC Team came to minister to these women last year.

Joy of all joys, with the third verse, “There were no tears during the prayer, but only joy.” The third verse of “O, Pure Virgin,” the hymn by St. Nektarios. Then—a pause… They wanted the Americans to sing! A quick deliberation ensued, and we decided to sing; “O, Pure Virgin,” the hymn by St. Nektarios. Then—a beautiful thing! On the second verse, the lovely priftereshas picked up from there, singing the same hymn in Albanian! We realized that, while over 1600 Churches and monasteries were for all Albanians after their recent times of tribulations. Our dollars go “further” there, and every donation is greatly needed. OCMC

His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios knows that Orthodox Christian women are important and that the role they play in the life of the Church is vital. He welc...
KENYA

This fall, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Kenya embarked on a three-week pastoral visit of different areas of the Republic of Kenya. His Eminence celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the church of St. Luke in Nandi together with four other priests of the area. The day was dedicated to the Mothers’ Union of that area, where a good number of them arrived very early from different parishes. At the end of the Liturgy, His Eminence elevated the new Director of the Mothers’ Union, who is also the parish priest of St. Luke, to the office of father confessor. After the Liturgy, His Eminence officially opened the seminar for the day. Speaking to them, he expressed first of all his joy that once more he was with them and at the same time witnessed, because of the large number of attendees, the love and the dedication not only of the Mothers’ Union but also of the papadhias who were present. He said that the Archdiocese appreciates the contribution of women towards the development and progress of the Orthodox Church. He said that the Archdiocese appreciates the contribution of women towards the development and progress of the Orthodox Church. He said that the Archdiocese appreciates the contribution of women towards the development and progress of the Orthodox Church.

On behalf of the Mothers’ Union, the Chairlady, Presvytera Stylianos, expressed the feelings of all the mothers present and their appreciation for the presence of His Eminence in all such meetings of the Mothers’ Union.

His Eminence invited the Mothers’ Union to come and see, to become useful instruments of the grace of God.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Fr. Antonio for the encouragement and peace of all the Orthodox faithful in Guatemala.

Praying for His Eminence Metropolitan Athenagoras as he addresses the needs of the Church in Guatemala. Finally, please pray for the OCMC missionaries who are working in Guatemala to meet the needs of the faithful.

ABOVE: His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Kenya thanks the women of the Mothers’ Union, who gathered at Nandi, for their contribution towards the development and progress of the Orthodox Church in Kenya.

GUATEMALA

On Saturday, June 19, Fr. Antonio Pata Tucuc fell asleep in the Lord. Fr. Antonio was one of the six indigenous Orthodox priests serving in Guatemala. In May, Fr. Antonio had undergone a leg amputation due to complications from diabetes. The amputation left Fr. Antonio weakened and struggling to recover his full health. Sadly, Fr. Antonio passed away at the hospital in Tiquisate, Guatemala. His funeral was held in Málaga on Tuesday, June 23.

Fr. Antonio’s death presents another challenge to the growing Orthodox Church in Guatemala. In 2010, thousands of Guatemalans were received into the Orthodox Church under His Eminence Metropolitan Athenagoras, Metropolitan of Mexico and Exarch of Central America. Through the tireless efforts of the local clergy, these communities continue to grow in the Orthodox Faith. Yet they also have faced challenges. In 2014, the communities lost their beloved leading priest, Fr. Andrés Girón. That loss has been amplified by the loss of Fr. Antonio. Now, with only five priests to care for thousands of members, the Church in Guatemala is in even greater need of prayers and support from the broader Orthodox Church.

Please pray for the repose of the soul of Fr. Antonio and for the encouragement and peace of all the Orthodox faithful in Guatemala.

Praying for His Eminence Metropolitan Athenagoras as he addresses the needs of the Church in Guatemala. Finally, please pray for the OCMC missionaries who are working in Guatemala to meet the needs of the faithful.

ABOVE: On Saturday, June 19, Fr. Antonio Pata Tucuc fell asleep in the Lord. His death, following the passing of Fr. Andrés Girón, has been very difficult for the faithful of Guatemala, who hunger and thirst as local leadership as they continue their Orthodox Christian journey.

ABOVE: In addition to growing in fellowship, the children and young adults who participated in the Metropolis of Korea’s annual Summer English Camp and Young Adult Retreat found experiencing the Sacrament of Confession, the Divine Liturgy, and the daily communal worship services and prayers.

F

From July 27th through August 9th, the Orthodox Metropolis of Korea hosted its annual Summer English Camp and Young Adult Retreat, with the main theme, “Come and See” (Jn 1:46). Three different age groups participated from parishes across Korea: elementary (70 children), middle and high school (55 students), and young adults (25 young adults). In addition, many volunteer staff members, teachers, and assistants contributed their time and talents to this very meaningful and successful ministry program. All who participated reported that the camp was very uplifting and meaningful. They loved experiencing the Sacrament of Confession, the Divine Liturgy, the daily communal worship services & prayers, the theme lessons, English songs and learning activities, a variety of sport games and swimming, and delicious meals and snacks prepared by volunteers from the local churches of the Orthodox Metropolis in Korea. All of the reflections and discussions focused on the joy of “coming and seeing” Christ in prayer, in the Liturgy, in the saints, and in one another, as well as on our calling and responsibility as Christians to invite others to “come and see” our Lord and Savior through the life of the Church.

His Eminence Metropolitan Ambrosis of Korea, with the participation of the local clergy, supervised all the programs which were planned and executed by the directors of the summer camp retreat, Rev. Antonios Lim and Eleftherios Christou. Teaching staff included Sr. Athanasia Kontou (Korea/Greece), Spiro Deligiannis, Evangelos Pagones, Karina Rallis, and Julia Schroeter (Metropolis of Chicago), and two American English teachers living in Korea, Chris Anthony Jonker and Erik Spirden Lionberger. Drs. Pat and Perry Hamalos (Metropolis of Chicago) also contributed from their areas of expertise, and their children participated in the high school camp. His Eminence expressed his deepest gratitude to all the volunteers and participants, and he emphasized that this summer camp represents the future and spiritual growth of our younger generations. Several non-Orthodox Korean children also participated in the camp, drawn especially by its English language instruction. This shows that the camp is an effective way for the Orthodox Church in Korea to engage in missional outreach.

The clergy and lay leaders of the Church in Korea will continue offering spiritual retreats in summer and winter seasons, as well as other creative programs to uplift and engage our younger generations.

ABOVE: The Orthodox Metropolis of Korea held its annual Summer English Camp and Young Adult Retreat, with the main theme, “Come and See.” 70 elementary-aged children, 55 middle and high school students, and 25 young adults participated in the Camp.

Below: The Orthodox Children of Korea held an annual Summer English Camp and Young Adult Retreat, with the main theme, “Come and See.” 70 elementary-aged children, 55 middle and high school students, and 25 young adults participated in the Camp.
OCMC’s Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) program offers financial assistance to 376 clergy around the world serving in mission lands. These priests evangelize, catechize, and minister to the spiritual and physical needs of their own people. Orthodox Mission Priests welcome thousands in to the Body of Christ.

These faithful servants are crucial to reaching the millions of people who do not yet know Christ - those who are “waiting to become Orthodox.” You can share in their ministries through a gift to OCMC’s Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) program! Any amount will make a difference, but with a gift of $50 per month (just $600 per year) you can help make the ministries of a mission priest possible!

To learn more visit www.ocmc.org, call: 1-877-GO FORTH (463-6784), or email samp@ocmc.org.