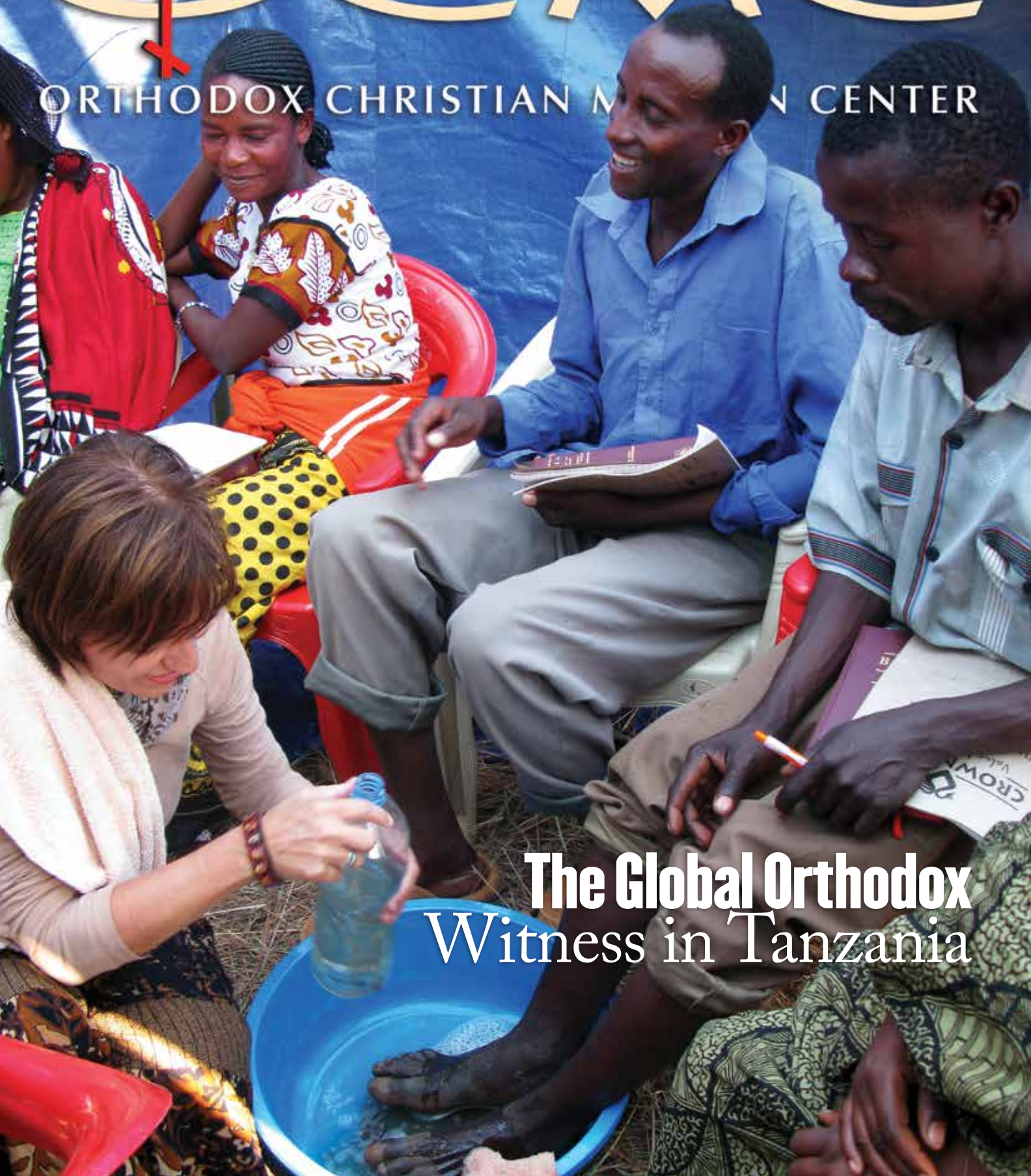




ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MEN CENTER



# The Global Orthodox Witness in Tanzania

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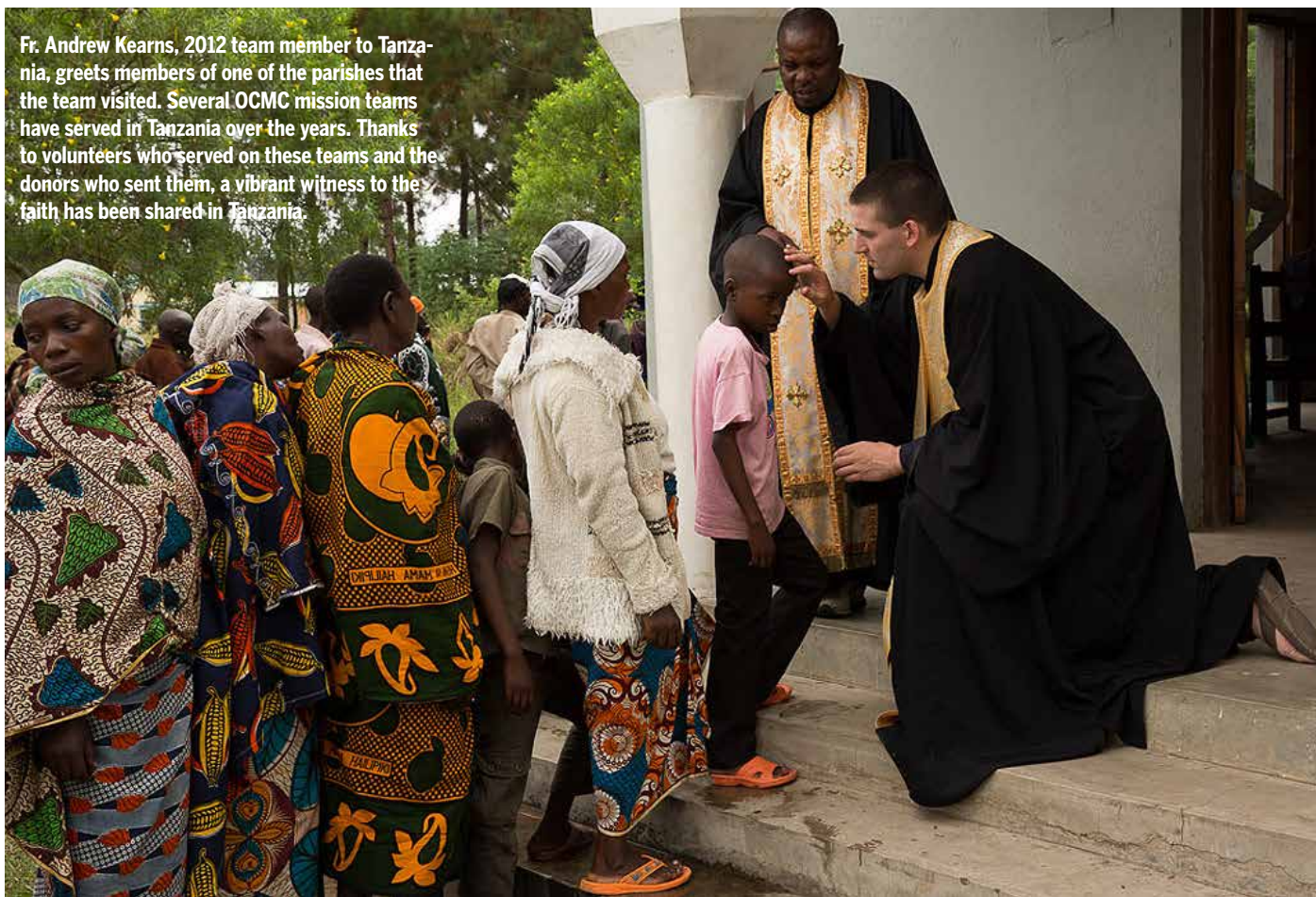
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**On the cover:** OCMC Mission Team Member to Tanzania Carrie Colis washes the feet of one of the students that attended the seminars that were offered by the team in 2011. Carrie is one of many people from around the world who have worked to share the Orthodox faith in Tanzania over the years. This global witness has helped welcome many people into the open arms of the Church. **Photo:** Filantropia/Mari Vainio

Fr. Andrew Kearns, 2012 team member to Tanzania, greets members of one of the parishes that the team visited. Several OCMC mission teams have served in Tanzania over the years. Thanks to volunteers who served on these teams and the donors who sent them, a vibrant witness to the faith has been shared in Tanzania.



# First Journeys to Tanzania

by Fr. Martin Ritsi

“Where is the road?”, I asked. “This isn’t a highway, it is barely a dirt path!” We had been driving since 6 a.m. with Archbishop Anastasios for his first visit to some new parishes near Bukoba, Tanzania. The evening before had gone late in Kampala (Uganda) and I, as the driver, had looked carefully at the maps and estimated how long it would take to reach our destination in Tanzania. The road map symbol was dark and solid, the sign for a highway like we had driven on from Kenya to Uganda. But, when we reached this “highway,” it was a simple dirt road - so bumpy we could hardly reach 20 m.p.h. It was hot, humid, there was no place to buy food, and we were hungry and tired as we bounced along the “road.” Archbishop Anastasios, who was sitting in the front of the 4x4 truck with me turned and said: “Fr. Martin, I hurt.” In addition to the grueling schedule and difficult conditions, he was feeling ill and his back was also in pain. That morning, I had accidentally swallowed a good deal of diesel fuel as I unsuccessfully tried to siphon fuel to fill up the truck for our journey. So, I too was feeling sick to my stomach. “I’m not doing so well either, Your Eminence,” I replied. And then, with a twinkle in his eyes, the Archbishop turned to me and said, “But this is the joy of sharing in Christ’s suffering!”

In these initial years of the late 1980s and early 1990s, things were very different in Tanzania than they are today. Within the Orthodox Church there were just a small handful of faithful clergy who had been trained at the Makarios Seminary in

Nairobi. All the roads leading to and from Bukoba Town were unpaved, electricity was scarce and survival - with a life expectancy of only 40 years old - was a challenge. On our visit with Archbishop Anastasios, we would inspect many mud churches and

make plans for developing them into what we called “semi-permanent” ones; that is, churches made of adobe bricks and iron sheet roofs. Day after day, we sat on freshly cut grass that was spread on the dirt floors of the homes and churches, or under awnings covered with banana leaves to protect us from the harsh sun as we met with the people, dreaming and planning how the Church would expand to meet the needs of Her thirsting and suffering people.

During this time, new candidates were identified to send to the seminary in Nairobi, sites were selected where churches would replace mud huts, priests were commended for the communities they had established, the depth to which they had taught the Faith, and the zeal and participation they had engendered in the people’s worship. On this specific journey with Archbishop Anastasios,

## First Journeys to Tanzania

we would also explore potential sites where a headquarters for this young, but thriving mission could operate from. What we didn't know at that time, though (and couldn't have known), was the amazing ways in which the Orthodox Church in western Tanzania would thrive over the next 20 years and how the entire area would be developed beyond our dreams!

In 2012, I visited Tanzania again and during that trip I marveled at these developments. I was able to visit communities where clergy I had helped train at the Makarios seminary were respected as leaders and mentors of the clergy that have since been ordained.

Just outside of Bukoba, near a theological training center built by the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) in the 90s, stands All Saints Church. The small original mud walled All Saints parish rests right next to the new beautiful cement block church which was donated by the faithful of Canonsburg, PA. Seeing these two buildings side by side, it dawned upon me how this church was now a symbol of the transformation that has happened. That small adobe building was actually one of the first semi-permanent churches we had erected after our journey with Archbishop Anastasios. What is amazing is that this new church is only one of many such churches which OCMC and donors from around the world have sponsored, that now stand throughout Tanzania.

During that same visit to the Kasikizi theological training center, we had a meeting with some of the new clergy – many of whom had been ordained for only a few years. One of the topics of discussion was the growth of the Church and the establishment of new

...priests were commended for the communities they had established, the depth to which they had taught the *Faith*, and the zeal and participation they had engendered in the people's worship.

parishes. "Fr. John, tell us about your efforts in your region," I asked. "Well, I was given 3 communities to care for, but now we are 9!" I went around the table and the story was the same from each clergyman until we came to one priest, who had just been ordained a year and a half, and he sheepishly admitted he had only begun 2 new communities!

From my visit to Kasikizi, we returned to the headquarters in Bukoba...in just a few hours! That center, too, is a symbolic sign of what has transpired. The facilities in Bukoba include a beautiful church, a dormitory guest house and a large 2-story administration building. Since my first visit to the area as the first white Orthodox Christian, the dormitory in Bukoba has received thousands of visitors. Many of these visitors are short-term mission team volunteers – just like the ones that built the Kasikizi theological

training center and the All Saints church. These visitors no longer come just from OCMC, they represent Greece, Cyprus, Finland, and other countries too.

The administration center also contains the offices of Metropolitan Jeronimos of Mwanza. Metropolitan Jeronimos, a Ugandan, was initially trained at the Makarios seminary in Nairobi and then went on for further studies in Greece. He was the second bishop to be assigned to the Bukoba diocese. But then, in 2007, the diocese was elevated to become the Metropolis of Mwanza, and this pious African bishop has become a Metropolitan and moved the headquarters to the largest city of this region – Mwanza. In Mwanza, he is constructing a larger seminary, alongside a beautiful new administration center.

The Metropolis, under his leadership, has grown in so many ways. Most recently there have been four OCMC missionaries serving under him assisting with community health care, opening a large clinic, beginning an Orthodox-based alcoholic prevention program (similar to AA) and helping in the general missionary outreach and the hosting of mission teams that come throughout the year to teach, care for the sick and suffering, and to participate in the opening and consecrations of new churches that are continually being constructed.

Because there are so many stories to share and so many wonderful accomplishments, this issue of the OCMC magazine will feature a number of articles that focus on the efforts of Orthodox Christians from around the world that point to the growth and vitality of the mission work of the Metropolis of Mwanza in Tanzania. So, rather than highlighting these developments here, I will conclude with one last story from my second visit to Tanzania which highlights something that hasn't changed.

We had driven 12 hours straight from Nairobi to Mwanza with a Finnish nurse and a newly-arrived short-term missionary – Dean Triantafilou (now Executive Director of IOCC). Upon arriving in Mwanza, we learned that the ferry to Bukoba did not depart for another two days and the overland route around Lake Victoria was too difficult to attempt. There was no Orthodox community there to connect with, so we passed the days sitting outside, near the lake, waiting for the ferry. I kept busy preparing

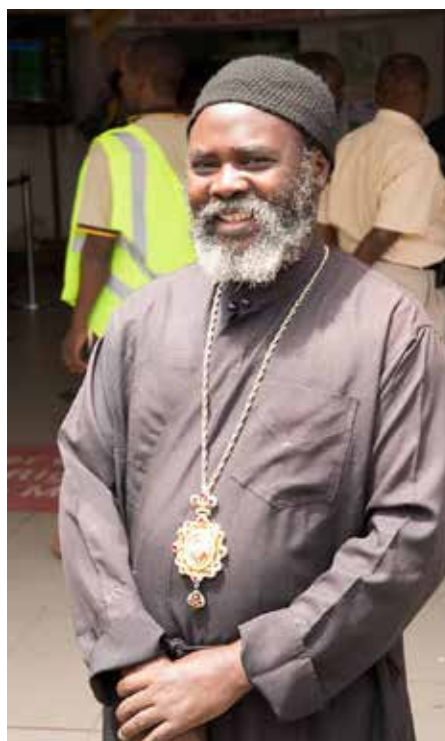
**LEFT:** The Orthodox Resurrection Health Centre in Bukoba. OCMC missionaries Maria Roeber and Felice Stewart helped to open and staff the health centre in 2012. The clinic is just one part of the expansion of the Church that services the needs of the Tanzanian people.





Upon arriving in Mwanza, we learned that the ferry to Bukoba did not depart for another two days *and the overland route around Lake Victoria was too difficult to attempt.*

for my seminary lessons back in Nairobi. After we finally boarded the ferry and were on our way, I met a missionary from an evangelical denomination. That missionary told me about a remote area nearby that he was working. As we talked, we realized that this was a region where the very first Orthodox outreach had taken place 20 years ago. The missionary spoke of all the people that had been baptized in those days, but that no one returned and many of these people were now attending his churches.



**ABOVE:** Metropolitan Jeronymos of Mwanza, where he is constructing a larger seminary and new administration center. Under his leadership, the Metropolis has grown in many ways.

**ABOVE:** Over the last 20 years, the growth of the Church in Tanzania has been astounding. There are so many people in Tanzania seeking Orthodoxy. Here, OCMC long-term missionary Maria Roeber laughs with a group of children.

Without thinking, the first words out of my mouth were, “Wow, we really blew it.” But, the missionary smiled and with passion surprised me when he said, “No brother, you didn’t blow it. Your Church brought all these people to Christ and now we are taking care of them. But please, I beg you...come back! There are too many thirsting people and no one to shepherd them. We need you here!”

This is a dimension of the spiritual situation in Tanzania: that even with all of the wonderful blessings, accomplishments, and growth of the last 20 years, there are many that have come to Christ but are not able to be nurtured in their newfound Faith and still many others who have yet to receive baptism and give their lives to the Lord. It is a field ripe and waiting for the workers to go forth. And as you will read in another article, our first response must be as we are directed by the Lord Himself in Luke 10:2, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”



**LEFT:** The needs are great in the Metropolis of Mwanza and Western Tanzania where His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos serves. The Church has partnered with programs and organizations from around the world to help meet these needs.

# THE LORD *of the* HARVEST

by James Hargrave

*“Your Eminence,”  
asks Stuart, “how can we help?”*

For ten days now, Stuart and the rest of the team have been teaching catechism here in Magu and in nearby communities. Before afternoon lessons on this final day, they are having lunch with His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos of Mwanza and Western Tanzania.

Stuart voices a question that’s been on everyone’s mind this whole time; the same question has stuck with me nearly every day since I arrived in Tanzania nearly three years ago. What can I do? How can I help? When folks back home ask how they can be involved, what do I say?

It’s a tough question because the need is obvious and overwhelming. Tanzania is a poor country.

People die daily from treatable and preventable diseases. Others go hungry. Subsistence farmers struggle to raise enough cash crops to send their kids to school with pens and notebooks, to buy tools and clothes, to put a roof on their home, and to get goods like tea and sugar that they can’t grow themselves. Out in the countryside, this team has seen that many folks have so little education

that they are barely literate and may have never had the chance to learn Kiswahili, Tanzania's national language. As team members teach in English, I and others translate into Kiswahili while another interpreter translates into the local language of Kisukuma.

Stuart's is a question that many are eager to answer. The growth of the Orthodox Christian faith here in western Tanzania has been supported by foreign assistance since the early 1980's. The bishop who received our founding priests into Orthodoxy, His Eminence Archbishop Anastasios of Irinoupolis (now of Albania), was an ethnic Greek based in Nairobi, Kenya. The early missionaries who he sent to us included Father Makarios from Kenya and His Grace Bishop Innokentios (not yet a priest at the time) from Uganda. In the late eighties, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center began getting involved by placing long-term missionaries in Nairobi whose territorial responsibilities included western Tanzania.

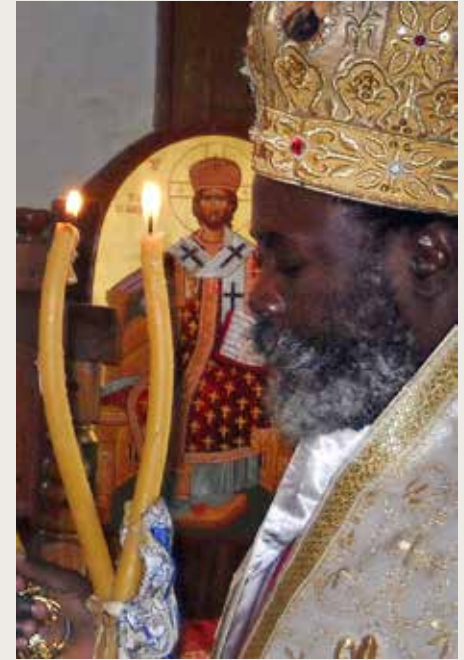
Much of our Archdiocese's outside support has come from Kenya, in the form of theological education; from Uganda, in the persons of our first two bishops Metropolitan Jonah and Metropolitan Jeronymos; and from Egypt, in the pastoral care of Their Beatitudes, the Popes and Patriarchs of Alexandria and All Africa (currently His Beatitude Theodore II). Additional support comes from beyond the continent. Poreia Agapis, a charitable organization based in Larissa, Greece, has funded the construction of church buildings and parish houses. Another Greek organization called KEDAS has

built a health centre outside the town of Bukoba and is involved with its ongoing management. We are visited regularly by monastics from Greece. Other donors in Greece, Cyprus, Romania, and North America have funded construction projects and have assisted with ongoing Archdiocese expenses. Parishes in California have sent us medical and construction teams as well as equipment for drilling wells.

I am most familiar with the assistance that has come through the Finnish Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, in the form of both personnel and funding. Since 2004, our Archdiocese has received teaching teams from the OCMC, which since 2008 have partnered with the Finnish Orthodox mission organization FILANTROPIA. These teams, which come once or twice yearly to teach catechism in rural communities, include the team which has brought Stuart and his good question.

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congregations.*

The OCMC also has sent us construction teams since 1994 and medical teams since 2011, and since 1996 has sent twelve mid-term and long-term missionaries, with a thirteenth on her way this summer, God-willing. The greatest impact may be through the OCMC's SAMP (Support a Mission Priest) program, which since the year 2000 has provided some of our clergy with a stipend that helps offset their considerable pastoral expenses.



Why are so many Churches, from three continents, so involved in the life and ministry of our Holy Archdiocese of Mwanza? I attribute this to three things: the reality of the need, the reliability of local Church leadership, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Our needs are all spiritual, because no aspect of life is beyond the reach of the Holy Spirit. Material needs (clean water, medicine, construction, funding) are most readily obvious to visitors from countries like Canada or Finland, but there are less tangible needs which are very important as

**ABOVE:** His Eminence Jeronymos was elevated to Metropolitan in 2007. His Eminence, who is Ugandan, has helped forge international partnerships that have helped shape and grow the Church in Tanzania.

**LEFT:** His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos of Mwanza (left) and His Grace Bishop Innokentios of Bujumbura (right) have both spent time as missionaries to Western Tanzania. OCMC began sending missionaries from Kenya to Tanzania in the late 1980's.



harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few.' What did He command us to do?"

The team members eye each other uncertainly. Nobody knows the answer. Stuart is in the spotlight. He finally says, hesitantly, "Uh, come and help with the harvest? Does He say to come and be a laborer in the field?"

I know the answer to His Eminence's question- not because I've memorized Luke 10:2, but because I know how my bishop always answers such questions. I whisper the correct response to Stuart and he says, "Oh - does Christ say we ought to pray?"

"Yes," replies Metropolitan Jeronymos. "Pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest, that He would send forth laborers into His harvest. This is what we need you to do. Pray for us. Pray."

When I get wrapped up in overwhelming material need, Christ's words are easy for me to forget. What do I need? Reliable infrastructure. Trustworthy partners. Good assistance. I need to work hard and be super productive. And I need cash, cash, cash. Right?

Well, sure, these things are all useful. But what we really need is the Holy Spirit. What we really need to do is stand still, quiet our hearts, and rest in the presence of God through frequent prayer. That is all.

This is His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos' answer to how the Holy Spirit has guided so much foreign assistance to the Holy Archdiocese of Mwanza. It is by prayer. And this is my bishop's answer to how you, too, can help. You can pray.

Please pray for us.



well. Our faithful require basic catechism to undergird the pastoral support provided by clergy who care for multiple congregations. They need a good witness to the love of Christ and the glory of God. They need inspiring examples teaching them how to live a holy life, how to pray, and how to follow Christ.

Since I arrived in Tanzania in April 2010, I have been honored to serve His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos and the dedicated Church leadership that he has set in place. I have good reason to trust my Archbishop and his staff, and their reliability and dependability encourages me greatly. And I have seen that the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit strengthen all aspects of our lives.

I know how I would answer Stuart's question. What can you- the reader in Canada, the US, Europe, or elsewhere-do? Come help out! Send us more long-term missionaries! Send us more teams! Fund new evangelistic efforts! Help with clergy salaries! Build new buildings! Fund Archdiocese translations and publications! Give, give, give!

His Eminence smiles gently. Stuart's question is not new.

"In the Holy Gospel," says Metropolitan Jeronymos, "when our Lord sent out the seventy apostles, He told them that 'The

**ABOVE:** Greek and Cypriot organizations have made major contributions to the growth of the Church in Tanzania. Here a representative from the Greek organization "Poreia Agapis" helps to lay the foundation stone for St. Nicholas Cathedral in Mwanza.

**BELOW:** His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos (seen here with mission team member Fr. Tapio Rautamaki of Finland and Mission Specialist Fr. David Rucker) has welcomed many OCMC mission teams and missionaries to serve the Church in Tanzania. OCMC ministries have shared the love of Christ in many ways, including teaching, youth work, healthcare, administration, and more.







**LEFT:** Many Finns like Anneli Pietarinen (right) have shared the love of Christ by serving on mission teams. Their steadfast commitment to the people of Tanzania has served as a powerful witness to the Faith and forged strong bonds of fellowship.

# Finnish Orthodox Missions: *A Holistic Process of Growth*

by Aino Nenola

Orthodoxy came to the area now known as Finland about 1,000 years ago. Today the Orthodox Church of Finland is an autonomous church under the Ecumenical Patriarchate. *The Church is a multicultural community of 61,000 members* – only a little more than 1% of the total population. Despite its minority position, the Orthodox Church has an official legal status, together with the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, which is the majority denomination in Finland. The Orthodox Church is growing because of the immigration from culturally Orthodox countries, especially from Eastern Europe. The Church is also receiving many new converts from the mainstream Finnish population.

## **Missions in the Orthodox Church of Finland**

Interest towards missionary work awoke among the members of the Orthodox Church of Finland in the 1950's. In the next decades, the international contacts between Orthodox youth strengthened this calling. The Orthodox Mission, the mission organization of the Orthodox Church of Finland, was founded in 1977. The first missionaries were sent to Kenya the same year. During the 80's and 90's, Orthodox Mission sent eighteen missionaries from Finland to work in Kenya.

One of the main objectives of missions in Kenya was improving the living conditions of the Kenyan people. The organization carried out a great number of development co-operation projects in order to build schools, health clinics, and wells. Building churches was also an essential part of the Orthodox Mission's work in Kenya since its first years.

In the early 2000's, there was a restructuring of the international work of the Orthodox Church in Finland. A Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called OrtAid was founded in order to

carry out the humanitarian aid, disaster relief, and development operations abroad. This segregation of mission and aid put the emphasis on the missionary approach of the Orthodox Mission – but it also led

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*One of the main objectives of missions in Kenya was improving the living conditions of the Kenyan people.*

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into a fruitful discussion concerning the relationship of aid, diaconia, mission, and evangelism in the Orthodox Church of Finland.

The missionary activities of Orthodox Mission continued in Kenya, though now without government-funded

development projects and focused on empowering the local church with small self-financed mission projects.

In our local Orthodox Church, we have decided to choose a holistic approach to mission and diaconia. From the beginning of 2013, the two organizations Orthodox Mission and OrtAid have merged together into Orthodox Church

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*Cooperation with the OCMC has been vital to our small organization.*

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Aid and Missions Filantropia. This has been both a practical and an ideological choice. We don't want to separate the Christian calling to witness with words and deeds; although we continue to work also with neutral funding from the government, our outspoken motivation is based on faith. In this new administrative structure, Filantropia continues projects in Tanzania, Kenya, Ethiopia, Moldova, and the Karelia region of Russia.

### **Finding Tanzania**

I met the OCMC's Fr. Martin Ritsi at a World Council of Churches (WCC) Conference of World Mission and Evangelism in Athens, Greece, in 2005. In 2007 I started working for Orthodox Mission and there was a need to network and find new directions to supplement the work in Kenya. I contacted Fr. Martin, and he invited me and our vice-chairman Outi Vasko to visit the OCMC headquarters in St. Augustine. The OCMC invited Orthodox Mission to participate in the Mission Teams program, and we sent the first joint mission team to Tanzania in the summer of 2008.

Cooperation with the OCMC has been vital to our small organization. Perhaps this is also part of our strategy as a small Church – we look for opportunities for networking, benchmarking, and strong partners. It has also resulted in a feeling that many of the OCMC missionaries are somehow “close to us,” especially in

**RIGHT:** His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos with Aino Nenola (3rd from the right) and Fr. Jyrki Penttonen(left of His Eminence) and the faithful in Mellunmäki chapel, Helsinki, June 2010.



*A Holistic  
Process of  
Growth*



## *A Holistic Process of Growth*



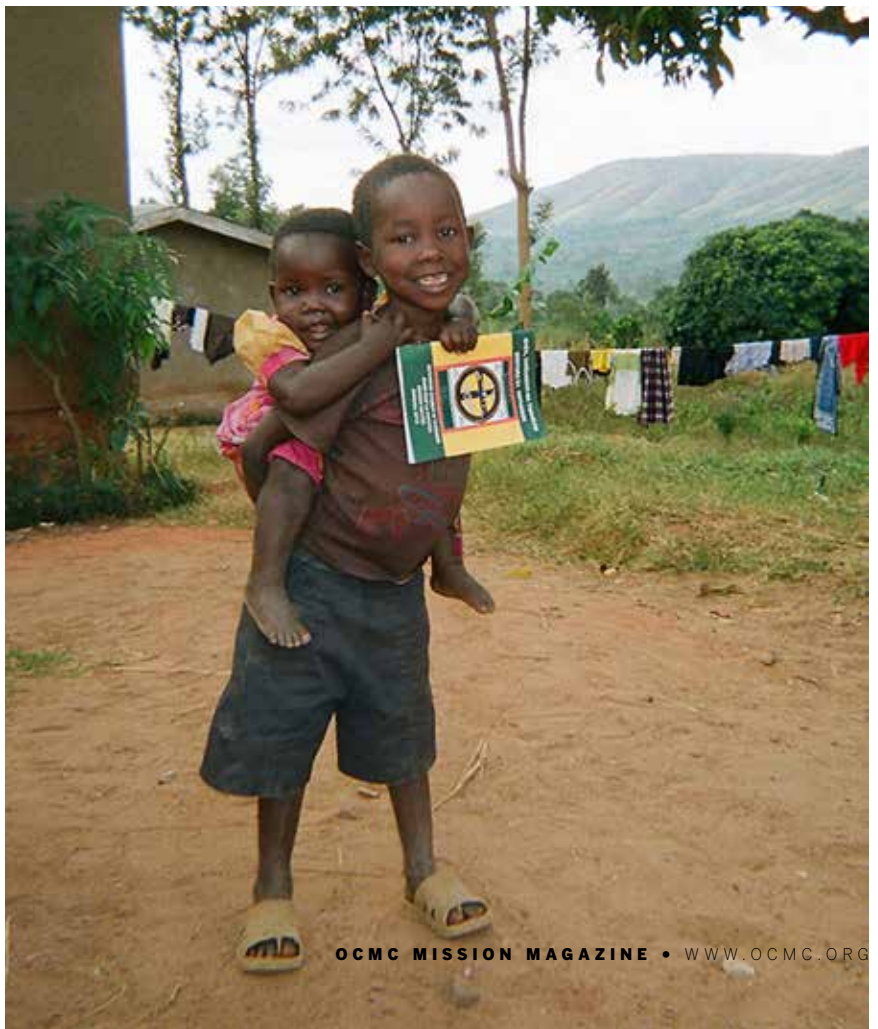
**ABOVE:** Outi Vasko has participated in and led short-term mission teams to Tanzania since 2008, when OCMC and Orthodox Mission sent a joint team. Since then, 6 more joint teams have gone to Tanzania. **RIGHT:** “Ibada, sakramenti na tamaduni (desturi) za Orthodox”, the first catechetical book about Orthodoxy from Finland in Kiswahili, was published in 2012. This book has helped many people in Tanzania, like these children, come to a deeper understanding of the Orthodox Christian faith.

Tanzania and Moldova, where we also have our own projects.

### **Witnessing of the Faith in Tanzania**

The first joint short-term mission team between Orthodox Mission and the OCMC was sent to Tanzania in 2008 with Orthodox Mission’s Outi Vasko and Fr. Tapio Rautamäki. Since then, Orthodox Mission has sent six more joint teams to Tanzania. The Orthodox Church in Finland has a strong tradition in lay education and organized youth work. The work of the mission teams has given a new approach to our way of speaking about missions. Because of this living experience from the teams to Tanzania, we have become stronger in our own Church when speaking out for missions.

Orthodox Mission has also supported other forms of missions in Tanzania. These



include small self-financed projects with school fees and support to training of clergy, especially to the Kasikizi Catechetical School. In 2011 and 2012, Orthodox Mission sent a teacher from Finland to assist at the Kasikizi School. With His Eminence Jeronymos' blessing, we published the first catechetical book of Orthodoxy in Kiswahili in 2012.

Last year, Filantropia started planning

## *The way of missions is very different in the Orthodox Churches...*

for the first government-funded development project in Tanzania. The main objective is to find sustainable ways for self-support and develop networking among Orthodox women in Tanzania.

### **Mission as Finding Communion**

There are similarities between the Orthodox Churches in Finland and Tanzania. We are small Churches.

Historically we have always emphasized the importance of the local language. The Church uses the language of the people, and it can become a positive part of the local culture. When I visit parishes in Finland, people are very excited about Tanzania. Somehow it seems familiar to us. In terms of number of members, we are about the same; also, the territory of the Archdiocese of Mwanza is about the same size as our country. We are even on the same time zone, only 8,000 kilometers apart.

His Eminence Jeronymos visited Finland in 2010. Missions is not a one-way action, but it is growing together and a learning process. Working together with His Eminence Jeronymos and the faithful in Tanzania has opened a new door and a chapter in our life as a mission-minded local Church. Seeing the efforts of the Tanzanians, we feel inspired. We may have more material riches but have a lot to learn from the spiritual well-being of the Orthodox Church in Tanzania.

The way of missions is very different in the Orthodox Churches than it has been within the great traditions of Catholic, Anglican, or Lutheran churches. Still, I think the question "how can we better bring the mission home?" is essential to us as a Western Orthodox local Church. How can we better share the spiritual radiance shining from the new Orthodox communities in the global south?

## **Mid-term Mission in Tanzania**

**"The students had a thirst for knowledge. They were interested in all subjects possible – theology of course, but also basic IT, economy, history, and learning English. I was impressed by how attentively they were listening to spiritual teaching. Surely there are a lot of challenges. The students' education background varies; some have only finished Primary level. Swahili is not necessarily their mother tongue, so some of them are studying with a second language.**

"One of the challenges is the lack of theological material in Swahili. Our grass-root way of addressing this issue was to type up all the notes from the classes. This was also a good way for the students to practice working with a computer – to many it was their first time. So, every evening after vespers, a couple of students would sit in my "living room" and type the notes from the day's classes. We read the notes with the teacher Anastasios Kiyonga and made corrections if there were misunderstandings. After finishing the course we went to Bukoba to print and copy the notes to every student. One copy was

placed in the school "library". This all was very time-consuming, but it was a good way for the students to practice typing and have some theological

**"I think that the Orthodox perception of humanity fits the African way of seeing a person as a unity. We are not separating reason, soul, and body..."**

notes on paper.

"After graduating from the two-year-course in Kasikizi, the students work in their parishes as catechists –

teaching the people and conducting lay services. Some of them will serve the parishes as priests; some might get a scholarship to study abroad. The students lead a simple life in the seminary and cultivate the plot that brings them their daily bread – corn and beans. During weekends they like to make small mission trips to the surrounding villages sharing their faith.

"I think that the Orthodox perception of humanity fits the African way of seeing a person as a unity. We are not separating reason, soul, and body. The Orthodox Church emphasizes the meaning of the community, and the liturgical services are deeply spiritual. I think we have a lot to learn from our Tanzanian brothers and sisters. Too often, our Western extremely economy-oriented and individualistic view on humanity doesn't see a person as whole but only the different corners."



Johan Slätis with the students of Kasikizi Catechetical School in 2012.



**LEFT:** Dr. Petros Mattheou performs a dental exam. Tooth decay and other dental complaints are common, but preventative care is rare, and most dentists working in the Bukoba area are not able to offer fillings, root canals, or anything more complex than simple extractions.



**BELOW:** Pediatrician Dr. Patra Key examines a young patient. Patient complaints and diagnoses range from the average cough and cold to complex cases of cancer, HIV/AIDS, and TB, as well as chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes, and hypertension. The health centre welcomes Greek, American, and African staff and volunteers to minister to the people who visit.



**RIGHT:** Laboratory microscopist Peace Hezekiah collects a blood sample from a patient. Lab tests currently available include rapid HIV, hemoglobin, urine dip, urine pregnancy test, blood smear for malaria, stool analysis for parasites, among others. The goal in the next year is to expand the testing available, as well as to hire more lab personnel.

# Healthcare PARTNERSHIPS in Tanzania

by Maria Roeber

“**B**ukoba is a small town in the Kagera Region of Tanzania—it is not well-known [from] as far away as your country! How is it that you have come such a great distance and decided to work here, among our people?” asked a local man. The answer, I told him, was that I am an Orthodox Christian, and that it was through my involvement with the Orthodox Church in my home country that I learned about Bukoba and the Orthodox health centre. The cooperation and collaboration between people of different nationalities and cultures make an impression on people here, and they take note that, despite our differences, the staff and volunteers at the health centre work together toward a common goal of providing healing to those who seek our help.

The Orthodox Resurrection Health Centre in Bukoba, Tanzania, received official registration from the Tanzanian Ministry of Health in March 2012. KEDAS, a Greek Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) founded by physicians, sponsored the construction and currently funds the operating costs of the health centre facilities. The Holy Archdiocese of Mwanza, under the direction of His Eminence Metropolitan Jeronymos, is the owner of the health centre. At the request of His Eminence, American OCMC missionaries serve in the facilities, helping to support the work of the Church to care for both the physical and spiritual needs of the people of northwestern Tanzania. Through partnership between our Ugandan-born Metropolitan, Tanzanian members of the local Church, Greek and American volunteers and missionaries, and African doctors, nurses, and staff members, the health centre is entering its second year of registered operation.

In November 2011 Giannis Dais, a volunteer and representative of KEDAS, arrived in Bukoba and met with His Eminence, OCMC missionary and nurse Felice Stewart, and I. We began to strategize about how to move forward with the registration process. Our first task was to hire a medical director, who could sponsor the registration with the Ministry of Health. His Eminence’s contacts within the municipal offices helped us recruit a retired Rwandan physician who had many years of experience in administration of Christian healthcare facilities. Once our medical director began to work, he and another local physician recommended by

His Eminence started scheduling interviews with other healthcare personnel. Felice, Giannis, and I worked with our physicians to recruit a head nurse, a pharmacist, a lab technician, an accountant/hospital administrative assistant, a secretary, and a cashier. Groundskeepers, guards, and housekeeping staff had been hired and were working already at the centre.

Giannis travels back and forth between Greece and Tanzania about four times a year, and spends approximately one month in Tanzania each time he visits. While Giannis was in Greece, Felice initially took on more administrative responsibilities in his absence, working to build relationships with the staff, sorting and disposing of expired medications and supplies, organizing offices and patient care areas, and working with local health authorities as they inspected the premises prior to registration. Once we’d hired more staff and registration was complete, I began

taking on more administrative responsibility and Felice focused more on direct patient and client interactions. As a registered mental health nurse and substance abuse counselor, Felice’s training and talents help to serve the needs of patients who come to the health centre seeking help that they have not been able to find elsewhere. She has helped to start Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon meetings at the health centre and is providing mental health and addictions education and training to staff.

My role at the health centre has been to facilitate communication between health centre staff, Giannis, our volunteers, and Church leadership. I’ve learned more about politics, legal frameworks, licensing procedures, banking transactions, and general building/plumbing/electrical maintenance than I ever thought I would need. Giannis and I work closely together to address whatever administrative issues need to be handled, whether it’s working on writing work contracts for staff with a legal advisor, negotiating outstanding bills with the water company, getting the hospital van inspected and registered, or making contacts with local businesspeople like carpenters or medical equipment technicians. When Giannis is in Greece we keep in touch via e-mail and Skype calls, and if there is any issue about which I don’t feel comfortable making a decision, especially financially, I run things by him. Giannis reports to the KEDAS board about the development in the health centre and also does a lot of work recruiting volunteer physicians and dentists from Greece to come work in the health centre.

**BELOW: OCMC Missionaries Maria Roeber and Felice Stewart with the staff of the Orthodox Resurrection Health Centre in Bukoba, Tanzania. The health centre received official registration from the Tanzanian Ministry of Health in March 2012. Maria and Felice were instrumental in the process.**



In September 2012, only three months after the health centre first started seeing patients with the new staff in place, we welcomed a combined team of American and Greek medical providers including physicians, a nurse practitioner, a pharmacist, a dentist, nurses, a lab technician, and administrative support staff, as well as a high school student volunteer. Project Africa Global, an American NGO, and Mission is Possible, a missions organization from St. Paul Greek Orthodox Church in Irvine, California, partnered to organize the trip from the US. Giannis and two volunteers from Greece and Luxemburg also joined the group. Giannis and I worked with His Eminence and local Church members to host the team, arranging lodging, meals, transportation, translators, etc. Some team members volunteered at the local government regional referral hospital, offering their surgical skills to patients free of charge. The team also offered medical care to rural village communities outside Bukoba on two days. The two weeks the team spent were rewarding for everyone, and many patients came to the health centre to receive care.

October 2012 brought a short-term OCMC medical team to the Bukoba area. Although the team provided medical care exclusively to rural villages and did not officially volunteer within the health centre, team members visited with our staff and generously donated medications, supplies, books, and equipment that remained after the end of their medical outreach. Since the other group from the US had also recently donated a great number of medications and supplies, the health centre staff worked hard with Giannis to inventory the items and to store them appropriately. We were extremely grateful to both teams, as we aim to provide services at minimal cost and on a not-for-profit basis. The staff at the



**ABOVE:** OCMC Missionary Felice Stewart provides information to staff and community members about addictions and recovery. Thanks to Felice and her team, substance abuse counseling is being offered through local Orthodox churches in several villages in Tanzania.

health centre eagerly asked if OCMC team members would be returning at a future date, so that they could work together.

In early November a KEDAS team arrived consisting of physicians and a dentist, as well as a non-medical but very motivated volunteer. At the same time, a volunteer from a different NGO in Greece, Poreia Agapis, happened to be in Bukoba and joined the team to provide technological and accounting services. This team collaborated extremely closely with our Tanzanian providers, exchanging ideas and learning from one another. Team members helped to set up both a minor surgical procedure room and also a room for emergency medical cases. One physician provided a brief demonstration and explanation of Basic Life Support protocols, which our staff was extremely eager and interested to learn.

February 2013 brought Giannis back to Bukoba, accompanied by a young Greek pediatrician. As I began preparing to depart to the US with Felice, we welcomed the addition of this new medical provider who seems very interested in remaining involved in the development of the health centre. With a background in public health and looking forward to a six-month assignment in the Central African Republic as a volunteer with Doctors Without Borders, Dr. Patra Key will be well-equipped to provide excellent advice and suggestions to KEDAS board members about the next steps of developing the health centre.

Currently, the health centre functions as an outpatient facility providing primary care. We have a working pharmacy and lab, but our ultrasound and x-ray technology needs updating. The dental room is fairly well-equipped, but there is room for improvement. The eventual goal is to build wards and extend the services to include in-patient care, which is definitely needed. Currently we have to transfer serious cases to other hospitals, and we'd like to avoid needing to do that in the future. The first building priority, however, as identified by His Eminence, is an Orthodox chapel on the grounds. His vision is to provide a full-time priest and offer daily services at the health centre as a means of ministering to the spiritual needs of the people. Although Felice's term of service in Tanzania is completed, her work and the AA meetings are continuing under the supervision of the medical director and other staff, as well as members of the AA group. In this way, the health centre is positioned to offer



**ABOVE:** Nurses from Project Africa Global, an American NGO, triage patients and take vital signs with the assistance of a Tanzanian nurse/translator. Many of the team members had experience with medicine and nursing in developing countries, including Africa, but for many it was their first visit to Tanzania.

holistic care for the bodies, minds, and souls of people who seek help.

The long-term vision for the health centre is for it to complement the existing healthcare structures presently available in Bukoba, not to replicate services already offered elsewhere. We are working to partner with NGOs in the US to donate medications and supplies, as well as with individual donors who have offered to provide equipment or may be interested in helping to finance construction projects. The greatest need is for human resources, since Bukoba is in a relatively rural part of Tanzania, and most healthcare providers would rather work and live in a more urban environment. It has proven a great challenge to recruit adequately educated and trained staff, given budgetary constraints. One temporary solution is to welcome individuals and teams of medical providers from abroad, but ultimately the goal is for the health centre to be administrated and fully staffed by indigenous professionals.

Despite linguistic and cultural differences, as well as varying professional backgrounds and personalities, our team of Africans, Europeans, and North Americans have come together to facilitate the opening of a health centre which has the potential to radically impact the physical, psychological, and spiritual health of people in northwestern Tanzania. I believe that it is no accident that so many people have managed to work so well together, despite many challenges. It is through the grace of God that three people with no experience in opening or running a health centre in Africa have experienced any success in this endeavor, and it is my hope that God will continue to bless it, and that people will be healed and brought to Christ through this ministry.



# The Impact of the Financial Crisis on Mission Priests

by Markella Balasis

Few people have not felt the effects of the worldwide financial crisis of the past few years in one way or another. The far-reaching impact of this situation has hit our Orthodox brothers serving as mission priests in Africa particularly hard. African churches under the Patriarchate of Alexandria are struggling to meet the needs of their priests. Bishops recognize that maintaining financial support to their clergy is a top priority, but resources for doing so have become extremely scarce.

A typical mission priest serving in Africa makes ends meet by receiving income via several sources. The local diocese distributes stipends which are subsidized largely through funding from the Orthodox Christian Mission Center's (OCMC) Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) program and the Churches of Greece and Cyprus. To make up the remainder of their needed income, priests and their families often tend a plot of land, utilize skills such as carpentry, run small businesses, or receive contributions from their parishioners for additional revenue.

Due to the recent financial struggles in Greece and Cyprus, monetary grants to the churches in Africa have been reduced drastically over the past two years; in some cases, support has had to cease altogether. For priests in Nigeria, for example, assistance has been cut in half, from 90 euros to 45 euros per month. His Eminence Metropolitan Alexander of

Nigeria explains, "Donations and support for our Seminary, school fees program, retreats, etc. have been reduced to just 10% of what we used to have annually."

With Greece and Cyprus unable to maintain their previous levels of assistance, the funding offered through the OCMC's SAMP program has become even more vital to the churches as they work to continue sustaining their priests. Of the 371 priests currently funded through SAMP, 352 serve in Africa, in countries such as Nigeria, Madagascar, Kenya, and Tanzania.

According to statistics published by UNICEF, more than two-thirds of the population in Tanzania lives below the international poverty line. Nearly 32 million people survive on an income of less than 40 US dollars per month. In light of these statistics, the significance of SAMP assistance to priests becomes enormous. In Tanzania alone, grants of \$50 per month

**"Donations and support for our Seminary, school fees program, retreats, etc. have been reduced to just 10% of what we used to have annually."**

His Eminence Metropolitan Alexander of Nigeria



**ABOVE:** In Tanzania, more than two-thirds of the population lives below the international poverty line. Grants of \$50 per month through the SAMP program are provided to 46 priests in Tanzania to help them continue their work of spreading the Gospel and sharing the love of Christ.

through the SAMP program are provided to 46 priests striving to preach the Gospel and share the love of Christ.

It is a great blessing that SAMP is able to offer this monthly assistance consistently and without delay through the generosity of our supporters. Especially since the reduction of other sources of income for mission priests, due to the economic crisis, SAMP assistance has become more important than ever. His Eminence Metropolitan Alexander affirms, "[The] SAMP program thus becomes a reality and a necessity that you...must consider as [a] priority.

"With the ongoing commitment of the faithful in North America, the SAMP program hopes to continue assisting our mission priests to bring Christ's life-saving message to those who have yet to hear it. The gesture of love to enable the work a mission priest will bear countless fruit in the years to come as that priest strives to be a good and faithful servant of our Lord. If you feel inspired to support a mission priest, please contact Markella Balasis, SAMP Program Coordinator, at 1-877-GO-FORTH, ext. 163, or via e-mail, samp@ocmc.org.



**LEFT:** Metropolitan Jeronimos of Mwanza, Tanzania, baptizing a baby with the help of local SAMP priests. Currently, 352 SAMP priests are serving in Tanzania and 13 other countries in Africa. Due to the financial crisis, these priests are relying more and more on OCMC's Support A Mission Priest program.

# Missionary *Updates*



ALBANIA

**LEFT:** Nathan Hoppe and his wife Gabriela help develop and strengthen the Church in Albania, directing the Central Children's Office and University student ministry. Here, Nathan teaches class at the Theological Academy.



MOLDOVA

**RIGHT:** Christina Semon (seen here with fellow missionary Ancuta Frantz), serves in Moldova. Her primary focus is helping initiate sustainable youth programs and ministries.



MONGOLIA

**LEFT:** The Monk Job (left), seen here with Fr. Aleksei Trubach, has secured his student visa in Mongolia, which he will be using to learn the language at a private school near the church in Ulaanbaatar as part of his initial assignment as long-term missionary.



TANZANIA

**RIGHT:** James and Daphne Hargrave welcomed their first child, son Peter Henry, on March 17, 2013, in Uganda. Upon return to Tanzania, they will be continuing their ministry.

ministry to children and families in which she and Nathan are so involved and which will be beneficial to their ongoing work there.

The focus on families is becoming increasingly vital to sharing the faith in Albania. Through the venue of special events and activities for children, entire families are being invited to and engaged in these outreaches of the Church. In response to efforts like these, many women have also been attending regular women's groups meetings that Gabriela leads.

In February, the Hoppes also participated in International Marriage Week in Albania. They conducted interviews and distributed 40,000 copies of a brochure containing stories and information about the value of marriage.

This Pascha, Anastasia Pamela Barksdale will begin her 6th year as a missionary in Albania, teaching Christian Education at the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy in Durres, offering campus ministry Bible studies and various lectures, seminars, and training, as well as continuing to work with Archbishop Anastasios at the Archdiocese of Tirana. Many of Anastasia's Christian Education students have begun to return to their villages to offer catechism classes and day camps while they are still in school. The Christian Education Resource Center that she began three years ago has expanded from five to 12 sites and reaches out to 260 children.

Georgia Bendo, in her 9th year as a missionary, continues teaching English at the Church's Logos University and Protagonist School. She also leads a large catechism group of middle school children at the school. The Farah Foundation grant which she acquired this year is strengthening the English and Catechism programs. She plans to close the year by taking 40 of the children on a pilgrimage to the icon museum and churches of Berati. In November her husband, Deacon Anastasi, was honored to become the Archdeacon for His Beatitude. Their children, Vasili and Evdokia, are both well and excitedly awaiting a new baby sibling in July! Several new missionary families are preparing to deploy to Albania this year, so please keep them in your prayers.

## ALBANIA

OCMC Field Leader and 15-year missionary veteran Nathan Hoppe and his wife Gabriela continue in their mission to help further develop and strengthen the Church in Albania, including directing the Central Children's Office and University student ministry in

addition to Nathan's ongoing teaching at the Theological Academy. Gabriela just received her Master's Degree in children's and family ministry from Bethel Seminary. Through this program, she has been able to conduct in-depth academic study of many aspects of

## CURRENT NEEDS

**Tirana, Albania:** A long-term missionary is needed to work at the Protagonist School.

**Turkana, Kenya:** Catechists and evangelists are needed to bring the Orthodox faith to the Turkana people in the north of the country.

**Mwanza, Tanzania:** Missionaries needed to provide substance abuse counseling, offer healthcare, teach English, and coordinate short-term mission teams.

For more information, or to inquire about long-term missionary service, please contact OCMC Missionary Director Dcn. James Nicholas by phone at **1-877-GO-FORTH** (463-6784), by e-mail at [missionaries@ocmc.org](mailto:missionaries@ocmc.org), or by visiting [www.ocmc.org](http://www.ocmc.org).

## MOLDOVA

OCMC Missionary Christian Semon was invited by the Association of Orthodox Youth-lasi (ATOR) to go to Portugal to visit Romanian youth in Lisbon. While in Portugal, she encouraged the youth to unite with one another as a church youth group.

Following the visit to Portugal, Christina helped welcome priests from Romania to Moldova who gave talks on the philosophical, poetical, and Christian perspectives of women. These priests delivered a powerful message about the role, value, and honor of women in society and in the Church to Moldovan youth and young adults.

Christina also ministered to girls at a half-way house by working to empower the leadership of their educators. She has helped to plan and raise support for their arts and crafts. Through these activities, they made Christmas cards, wreaths, flower brooches, and hair decorations which the girls sold to pay for an upcoming pilgrimage to a local monastery. Christina's primary focus in Moldova has been to help initiate sustainable youth programs and ministries, so please pray for the furtherance of this work.

## MONGOLIA

As a new mission field for the OCMC, Mongolia has had its typical share of challenges. The country has recently rewritten their laws on visa requirements which have forced our missionaries to "scramble" to secure status as students or employees in order to remain in the country for any length of time. One of our missionaries, the Monk Job, has secured a student visa which he will use to learn the Mongolian language at a private school near the church in Ulaanbaatar (an important part of any new missionary's initial assignment).

OCMC Missionary Kurt Bringerud has been teaching English at a private institute which has enabled him to obtain his necessary visa. He is also teaching a class at the Holy Trinity parish on the Japanese language to a small group of students. He uses the relationships he builds in each of these classes to introduce people to the faith.

Please remember them, and several new Missionary Candidates for Mongolia,

as they continue to enculturate into their new land and roles.

## ROMANIA

In Romania, Floyd and Ancuta Frantz continue their work with the Romanian Orthodox Church by furthering the development of outreach programs to the poor and "outcasts" of society in the Transylvania region of Romania.

Ancuta's program, The Protection of the Theotokos Family Center (PTFC), is focused on preventing child abandonment and is now nationally recognized as a standard for abandonment prevention. Ancuta is currently serving around 40 families through the PTFC by providing food, clothing, and daycare assistance so that the mothers can maintain a safe and secure household for their newborn and young children. The PTFC also provides counseling for the young mothers who need a new chance in life.

The St. Dimitrie Program, managed by Floyd, has the primary mission of developing and maintaining counseling programs dedicated to helping people in Romania overcome alcoholism and drug addiction. Through the St. Dimitrie Program, Floyd has traveled to Tanzania and to St. Herman's Seminary in Alaska to help establish new chapters of the program to minister to those struggling with addictions. He will be returning to St. Herman's this fall.

## TANZANIA

On March 17, 2013, OCMC Missionaries James and Daphne Hargrave welcomed their son Peter Henry into the world. Maria Roeber and Felice Stewart, fellow Missionaries to Tanzania, accompanied

the Hargraves to Kampala, Uganda, for Peter Henry's birth. James and Daphne look forward to returning soon to Tanzania and continuing their ministry with the Holy Archdiocese of Mwanza.

Maria and Felice both received their Tanzanian nursing licenses. Maria eagerly began volunteering as a labor and delivery nurse at a hospital in Bukoba. She assisted many laboring women with the births of their babies. She also finished up her work with the Orthodox Health Centre, turning over the majority of administrative duties to local staff. Maria is completing her two-year term of service this spring and is applying to nurse-midwifery schools in the US. She hopes to return to the mission field after completing her studies.

Felice began some individual counseling and saw the addictions meetings expand thanks to referrals that came through the health centre. Felice and local AA members conducted a "demonstration" meeting that resulted in two priests starting AA meetings in their villages. Felice is also nearing the completion of her current term of service in Tanzania and is evaluating her future options, as she desires to continue serving in the mission field.

## GUATEMALA

Fr. John and Presbytera Alexandra Chakos are now serving in Guatemala and are very involved in a range of mission activities associated with serving an historic number of new converts to the faith. Fr. John is committed to helping provide a program for catechizing tens of thousands of converts and helping to establish the first Orthodox seminary program in Latin America that must now train hundreds of new clergy to serve this great influx of indigenous people.

Fr. David and Matushka Rozanne Rucker will also be joining them in the field later this year through their new roles as Mission Specialists with the OCMC and to help support this great effort and strengthen the rapidly-growing Church in Central America.

Presbytera Renee Ritsi in Tanzania in 2012, where she served as Team Leader and was challenged to bring the best out in team members and encourage a deeper understanding of missions.



# Servant Leaders

by Pres. Renee Ritsi

“And whatever you do in word or deed, *do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” —COL 3:17

*Whatever you do, do it all in the Name of the Lord, giving thanks to Him. These words have directed me through many Team experiences on three different continents, living as an Orthodox Christian woman, wife, mother and presbytera, team host and team leader. My Team experiences have spilled over in life lessons for other parts of my life, building upon each other and becoming woven into the very fabric of who I am. Some Teams start off perfect and stay perfect – with easy lessons presenting themselves for both the Team and the individuals that the Team has gone to serve. Other times the opportunities for spiritual growth come from processing difficult challenges.*

Having experience in a cross cultural setting, possessing a solid knowledge of missions, being a pastoral listener are a few key ingredients for a Team Leader to possess so that Team Member experiences become for them a piece of the spiritual

foundation of their very lives.

Team Members come from different parts of the continent and from different jurisdictions; they range in age from young children to grandparents and in background from students to retired professionals.

Team Leaders do their best to bond these differences into one, spiritually driven, cross culturally open, service minded group that more than anything reflects Christ through their words and deeds, while encouraging each Team Member to use their own unique gifts to glorify Him.

Challenged by the level of poverty and social injustice that exceeds anything experienced at home, it is very common for healthcare Teams to often see patients who could be healed if they lived where medical care was more available. Even things like an infection that would have responded to antibiotics at home can lead to gangrene and amputation in a third world situation. The Team Leader, by being aware of the culture and being a sounding board for the flood of emotion that these injustices hold, helps the team filter those experiences. By encouraging them to accept the differences that cannot be changed and to use them as motivation for compassion and action, this allows the challenges to become spiritual lessons that help us grow in Christ and ultimately to become more Christ-like.

On my list of top twenty Team memories is an experience from one of the first Teams to Albania after the fall of communism – when a high distrust for religion, missionaries and mission work was prevalent. Our van was stopped at a police checkpoint and a Team member nonchalantly tossed a plum pit out the van window. That innocent plum pit struck the cheek of the officer who was checking the registration and driver's papers. The little plum pit delayed the team's arrival to their evening destination while the officer regained his composure by scrutinizing everyone's passport and visa and taking great liberty in making everyone wait in the hot summer sun. As minutes merged with hours the Team's emotions ranged from anger to compliance and then to resentment. Later that evening, as the Team was debriefing we discussed the importance of accepting things that we can't change. By accepting and working within the existing situation to present Christ, we are reminded that He is rarely seen in the eyes of angry and resentful people and we are His hands and His feet, His love and His outstretched arms to His people.

Another experience that has made it to my top twenty list is from a more recent Team's first day in Tanzania. This Team's host, His Eminence Jeronymos, had been one of my students over 25 years ago and wished to accompany our road weary

**RIGHT :** Presbytera Renee Riitsi served as Team Leader in Tanzania on the 2012 healthcare team. Team Leaders help the other team members to act with compassion and allow challenges they face to become spiritual lessons. **BELOW:** On the 2012 Tanzania healthcare team, team members arrived at a local parish, where bamboo rooms had been built outside the church for team members to administer healthcare—an example of beautiful hospitality by their hosts.

travelers from the airport to where the Team would be staying, on the other side of the country. The 12 hour drive would have, in itself, been a bit of a challenge, but the plane arrived late - very late. Instead of starting our journey right away, we were first treated to a wonderful lunch with a number of speeches and then to a tour of the city and a stop to see the new cathedral that was under construction. Then we had to make a few stops to pick up more people, load about 50 boxes of medicines, and offer some well hydrated Team Members relief. Instead of getting to our sleeping quarters by dinner, it was around 4 a.m. As we processed the blur of events that was our first day, we could have focused on the lack of sleep or organization that seemed evident, but instead an important lesson about a proud and hospitable host was in the making.

As we piled out of the van just a few hours later at the parish of St. Fanourios, we were overwhelmed by a packed church. We had driven through sparsely populated



countryside and doubted if there would be many people at the first clinic. A number of Team members hadn't slept that night as they packaged medicines, and we were all exhausted. As we drove up to the Church we saw an amazing sight. Crude bamboo rooms had been erected along the side of the Church. Fresh cut grass covered the dirt and rocks. Colorful cloths and palm leaves divided the waiting rooms from the doctor's office. The pharmacy room was bright and sunny, with walls that only came up half way from the ground. The morning began inside of the Church with a short prayer service, a number of speeches expressing gratitude and a service to bless oil. Then the Team and our translators were anointed and we rushed to complete setting up the clinics so we could begin to see the long lines of people who were standing in line to be anointed. That first day, and every subsequent day, we did our best to imitate the humble yet gracious actions our hosts showed us as the lines of patients seemed to never end.

Often, I am asked difficult questions by Team Members. For example, why, when so many people are hungry or without basic education, are finances used to build permanent Church structures in mission countries? Drawing upon the missiological principles of our Church, a Team Leader can help the team transform this question into a stepping stone for a deeper spiritual understanding of missions. Across generations and cultures, when the Orthodox Church spreads to a new region, it is common for the faithful to build a fitting place in which to worship God, and from which the fullness of the sacramental and spiritual life of the Church is dispersed. We understand that as Orthodox Christians, a building is not necessary because we ourselves are the living temple of God, but when a church is built it is a way for ourselves and others to observe that our God is 'He who was, who is and who is to come' and He lives on this earth, with us and that this building is built as an outpouring of our love and respect for Him.

As a Team Leader, we are challenged to bring the best out in each individual and to help encourage a deeper understanding of the mission behind the service. Our experience in a cross cultural setting, knowledge of missions and being a pastoral listener are a few key ingredients that helps Team Members *"do it all in the Name of the Lord, giving thanks to Him"*.

If you feel called to serve as a mission team leader, please contact Teams Director Andrew Lekos by phone at 1-877-GO-FORTH, or by e-mail at [teams@ocmc.org](mailto:teams@ocmc.org).



# Missions

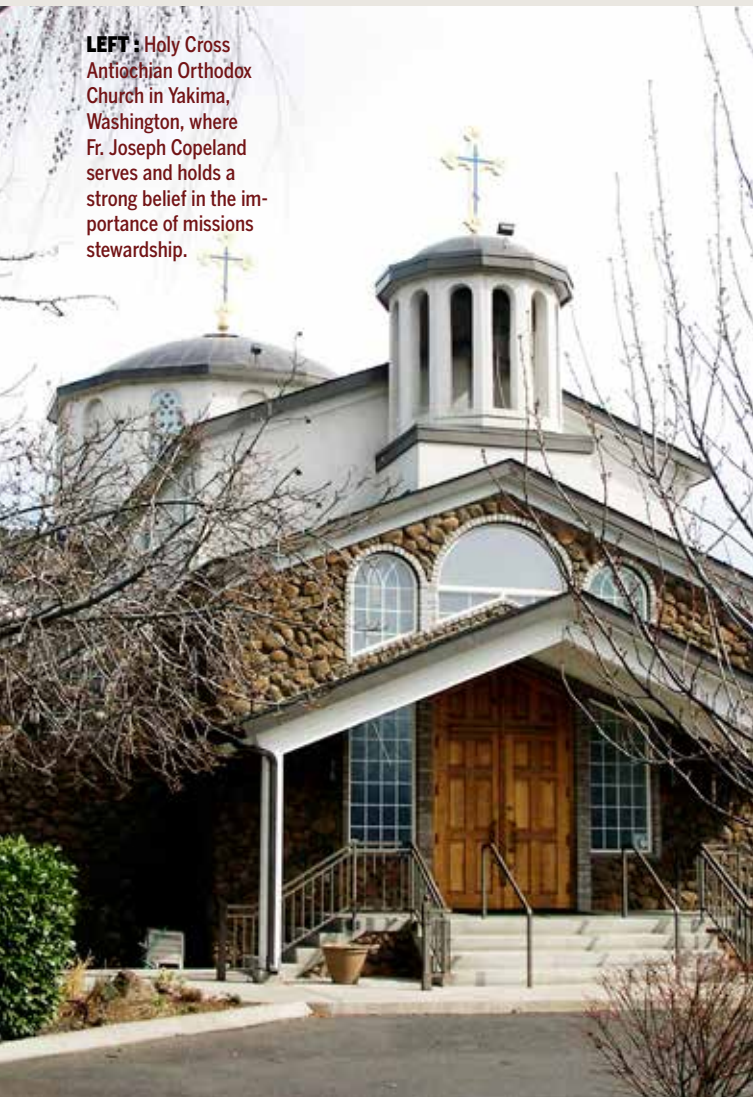
## at the Heart of Local Parish Ministry

*“Church is a reality of the love of God for this world. It is not man’s response, and it is not self-centered, but precisely a missionary community whose purpose is not salvation from, but salvation of, the world.”*

—FR. ALEXANDER SCHMEMANN

by Kenneth Kidd

**LEFT:** Holy Cross Antiochian Orthodox Church in Yakima, Washington, where Fr. Joseph Copeland serves and holds a strong belief in the importance of missions stewardship.



Many Orthodox parishes across the country, both large and small alike, recognize that missions, while a vital aspect in our personal walks with Christ, is also central to the ministries and life of the local parish. Many years ago during a visit to St. Anne Orthodox Church (OCA) in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, I remember being immediately struck by missions as I walked through the front door of the church. Not only was there a bulletin board promoting missions opportunities available through the OCMC, along with prayer cards for long-term missionaries, but information and opportunities from our sister agencies, including IOCC and OCF. Likewise, it was practically impossible for me to hang up my coat because scattered across the floor were bins and barrels collecting food, clothes, and other items for local community ministries. Among these bins was a large box collecting Bibles to be sent to mission priests served through OCMC ministries, which prompted my visit. I left Oak Ridge inspired by the vision and connection that this small Appalachian Mountains mission parish felt with their brothers and sisters not only in their community, but throughout the world!

Through my work at the OCMC, it has been a blessing to serve, as well as learn from, many small parishes who are building beautiful missions ministries. I recently got to know Fr. Andrew Harrison, priest of St. Luke Orthodox Church (OCA), in Palos Hills, Illinois.

This small parish in suburban Chicago has cultivated numerous opportunities for the faithful to participate in missions both internationally as well as in their own community, and he sees the two as complementing each other. OCMC ministries have regularly benefited from its members serving on mission teams as well as from an endowment this parish has grown that matches parishioner gifts, and in turn, doubles it! Fr. Andrew offered the following reflection on why missions is so important in parish life:

**Fr. Andrew Harrison, St. Luke Orthodox Church (OCA), Palos Hills, Illinois**

“Inspired by the missionary saints who first established the Orthodox Church in Alaska and the call ‘to preach the gospel to all nations,’ St. Luke parish was founded with the mission state-

ment to become an 'Icon of an American Orthodox Church.' In order to fulfill this vision, the founding members conceived the mission as having two prongs: mission in North America and mission internationally.

"The faithful of St. Luke have a beautiful presence here in our community. Over the years, they have cultivated local ministries that include: monthly prayer service and fellowship at a home for mentally-challenged adults; annually hosting an ecumenical memorial service for September 11th; weekly hosting of homeless women and children as part of a network of local churches; offering meeting space for three self-help groups; and making available an open air public shrine so anyone can pray and light a candle 24 hours a day. A monthly offering is taken to help a variety of charitable causes and this amount collected is matched by an endowment fund.

"Missions beyond our community began at St. Luke with Project Mexico, and have since grown to also include work on Native American reservations through Young Orthodox Christian American Missions Association. Through OCMC, short-term mission team members have been sent for teaching in India, two youth camps in Romania, church construction

and medical mission in Tanzania, and serving at the Hogar Raphael Orphanage in Guatemala. This year, six individuals are preparing to serve in Alaska as part of an OCMC team!

"One may ask, has all this missionary activity added numbers to the congregation? The answer to this question is 'slightly. Our parish of 80 families has replaced those who move on and has added a few new members each year. The purpose of this missionary activity is not to gain new members. The Lord will send them if His work is being done. The purpose is to fulfill the grand commission of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ calls all Christians to this task. People who join St. Luke parish are expected to heed the call. Christ said, 'The fields are ripe for harvest but the laborers are few.' To be a member of St. Luke parish, it is expected that a member will take on some ministry. All ministries have but one purpose, to fulfill the grand commission: from parish council president to candle stand cleaner. The grand commission includes making disciples. If all members continue to fulfill their ministry, then they are becoming disciples and will eventually join the mission field."

Another community that I have come to know is Holy Cross Antiochian Orthodox Church in Yakima, Washington. For many years now, Holy Cross has offered a generous monthly stewardship offering to the OCMC. Fr. Joseph Copeland, priest at Holy Cross, offered the following reflection on why missions stewardship is important:

**Fr. Joseph Copeland, Holy Cross Antiochian Orthodox Church, Yakima, Washington**

"In 1987 our little group of 75 folks was received into the communion of the Orthodox Church through the loving kindness of His Eminence Metropolitan Philip of the Antiochian Orthodox Church. We are now about 300 souls and have planted, participated in planting, and are planting other missions in our area. If we believe that the Orthodox Church is the True Church established by Jesus Christ according to the Apos-

**LEFT:** In the midst of growing ministries and capital projects, Fr. Joseph Copeland maintains missions as a core activity that the parish must continue to support on a monthly basis.



**ABOVE:** Missions is just one of the ministries central to the work of the faithful at Holy Cross in Yakima. The St. John of Kronstadt School is another, pictured here.

tolic witness, that the Church is the sacramental reality of Christ's Kingdom on Earth, and that it is in that sacramental reality that we are joined to Christ and participate in His eternal life, then it is our greatest calling and privilege to labor for the planting of that Church all around us and throughout the world! That is why we are so glad to support the work of OCMC with our small offering each month. May God bless it and the work of OCMC."

Parishes are discovering the joy that results from a holistic approach that touches both the local community as well as around the world. The witness offered by those who serve and/or support international missions inspires and encourages those serving the local community and vice versa. The OCMC remains a resource for international missions for all Orthodox faithful as you consider your response to Christ's Great Commission to "make disciples of all nations," whether as an individual, within your family, or as part of your local parish. We are able to offer a variety of resources for your Bible Study, Sunday School, Youth Group, as well as your family!

To brainstorm and discuss opportunities to further engage your parish community or group in the work of international missions, and begin the process of building an international missions program, please give OCMC Annual Gifts Officer Kenneth Kidd a call at 904-829-5132, ext. 161, or send him an e-mail at [kenny@ocmc.org](mailto:kenny@ocmc.org).





# *A Journey of Faith*

**W**itness Orthodox missions in action as the apostolic call to make disciples of all nations comes to life in OCMC's new DVD "A Journey of Faith". Be transported to a far-off land where life is harsh and the longing for God is real. Learn

how the faithful of North America have shared the love of Christ with the Turkana people of northern Kenya. See how the truth of the Faith has transformed lives. Experience the mass baptism of our new brothers and sisters in Christ.

Order your copy of OCMC's new video on DVD today! Each order comes with discussion questions that can be used in a mini-retreat setting. Contact the Orthodox Christian Mission Center by e-mail at [communications@ocmc.org](mailto:communications@ocmc.org) or by phone at 1-877-GO-FORTH to receive a free copy of the DVD and discussion questions. You can also view the video online at [www.ocmc.org](http://www.ocmc.org).