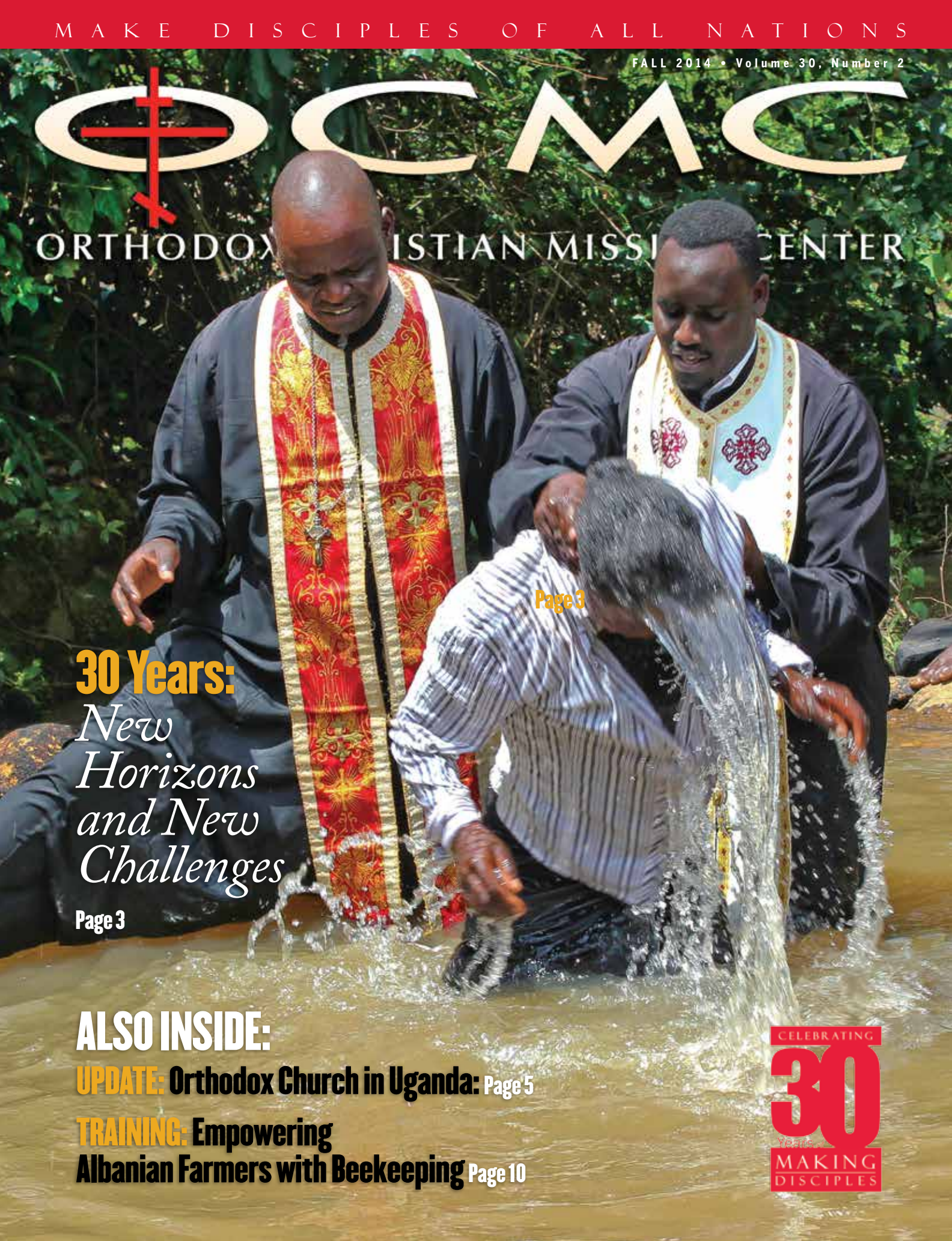




ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSION CENTER



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

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On the cover: As OCMC celebrates 30 years of missionary witness around the world, we prayerfully reflect on the strides the faithful of North America have made in carrying out Christ's Great Commission while planning future efforts to share the good news of the Gospel including raising up indigenous clergy who are welcoming the newly illumined into the Body of Christ through Holy Baptism.



30 YEARS:

New Horizons and New Challenges

by Fr. Martin Ritsi

The desert wash was an expansive, sandy channel winding through the hot and remote Kenyan landscape. Over the years, it had filled occasionally with water from faraway rains that bring life and hope to those who survive in this harsh climate. Though the sands had been dry for some time, the river wash awaited an unseasonal watering so that it could participate in transmitting the blessings of God. During the night, the skies lit up from lightning flashes on the horizon. Then, in the early hours of the morning, the river began to flow, violently at first, but then subsiding to a steady stream that beckoned to the villagers to come and receive the gift of life. On that day, at the culmination of a year's catechism, over 100 people were immersed in these waters that miraculously appeared to receive baptism into Christ!

The baptism in Nakabosan and the evangelism and establishment of the Orthodox Church in Turkana, Kenya, are a testimony and symbolic statement of the growth of Orthodox missions and the work of the OCMC, now celebrating its 30th year of ministry and 20th year as a pan-Orthodox agency. Present at the baptism were three of the 98 missionaries who have served under OCMC over the last 30 years and two of the 17-person multi-jurisdictional OCMC staff in St. Augustine, Florida. Two of the 259 local Kenyan clergy were instrumental in bringing this village to Christ. Not far from the baptism site was one of 37 churches built

by OCMC. There was also a water well and a school that were built as part of the holistic missionary outreach that addresses both the spiritual and material conditions of those evangelized. The nearby church was built by individuals who participated on an OCMC Mission Team together with local Orthodox from the neighboring village of Loupwala.

Each aspect of this event was only a dream in 1985 when OCMC first began. At that time, missionary work was questioned - at home and internationally. Our efforts

were led by a staff of just a couple of people. There was no missionary training center. No missionaries had been sent. Mission teams were not yet thought up. The seminary to train today's many indigenous clergy in Africa was just opening. The thought of being involved in evangelizing unreached peoples from remote tribes, or participating in the resurrection of an Autocephalous Church such as Albania, was beyond our means. There were only a handful of indigenous mission clergy, and Orthodox mission work was rare.

We can engage in new possibilities that were but a dream 30 years ago.

But today, the past three decades have seen exponential growth of missions. Orthodoxy worldwide has re-entered the scene with missionary work established on 6 continents and new efforts beginning regularly. This growth, though, is not representative of reaching maturity. Rather, it represents a solid foundation that a house can be built upon. With this foundation, we can now look forward to new horizons. We can engage in new possibilities that were but a dream 30 years ago.

At the same time, as we look forward to new possibilities we must also respond to new challenges. One of these challenges is the

30 Years: *New Horizons and New Challenges*

understanding of missions as a central aspect of our faith. Even though the presiding leaders of our Mother Churches recently asserted in a joint statement that the “evangelization of those who do not believe in Christ, constitutes the supreme duty of the Church,” last year only 18% of Orthodox parishes in North America participated in international missionary work through OCMC. Involvement and support of Orthodox missions have grown dramatically in the USA, but they show only a fraction of our potential. There is a need to expand our vision to include this “supreme duty,” entrusted to us by the Lord. Over one billion people...one billion have not yet heard the gospel message. If our primary mode of operation remains to focus on our local needs, they will not hear – at least not from the followers of the Orthodox faith. On the other hand, if so much has been done through only 18% of the Orthodox parishes in the United

States, think of what the possibilities would be if more parishes participated!

Another challenge that we are now able to address is a result of the growth and success of the past 30 years. Just as a child goes through natural stages of development, so do institutions, ministries, parishes, and mission Churches. One of the prevalent next steps in the development of Orthodox missionary Churches today is that of self-support and sustenance. Parishes, seminaries, and national Churches are established on many continents. In the startup phase of these churches, material aid for infrastructure, training, and day-to-day operations was essential. This enabled the rapid growth and establishment of the Church. As these Churches mature, they have the potential to become mission-sending Churches. But first, the ability to meet basic needs, such as support and training of clergy, along

with funding their hierarchs and national ministries must be tackled.

Addressing self-support is an exciting area OCMC has focused on in the most recent years and one which will develop in the years to come. Because it is so new and central to next steps in Orthodox missions today, the majority of this issue of the magazine will highlight examples of how this is being done. One striking reflection is provided by Fr. Dr. Nicholas Bayego from Uganda, who after co-organizing an OCMC self-support retreat with all the clergy and parish representatives of Uganda is now deeply engaged in addressing this issue and reflecting upon how to go forward in his country.

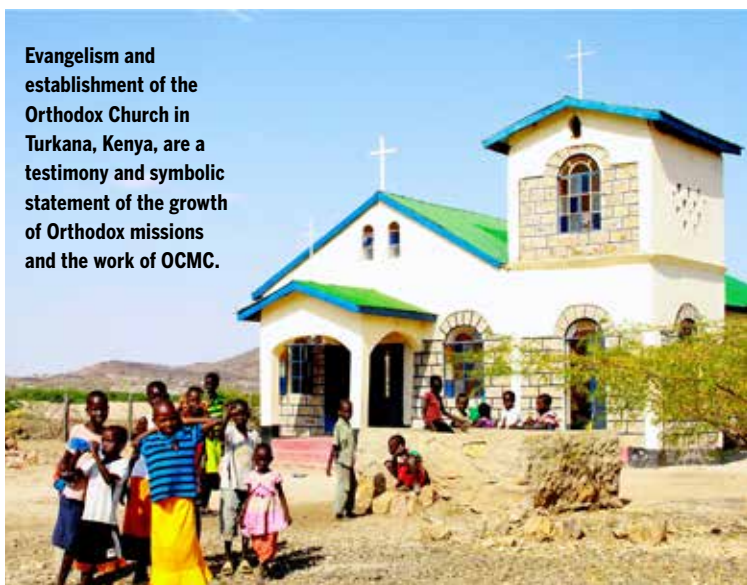
Orthodoxy is spreading in the world today. People who had not heard the Gospel before are coming to Christ. The Church is being established and Jesus’ love is being shared. After 30 years, a solid foundation for missionary work is laid through a pan-Orthodox effort. Within that foundation is a myriad of lives that are shaped, thousands of souls touched, and countless miraculous examples of God showing His presence and transforming those who draw near to Him. We hear in the Psalms, “Unless the Lord builds the house, in vain do the laborers toil” (Psalm 127). May we now build upon the foundation laid over these 3 decades, joyfully rise up to new opportunities on the horizon, and diligently engage the challenges of today, so that God’s love may be proclaimed to, and by, all nations.



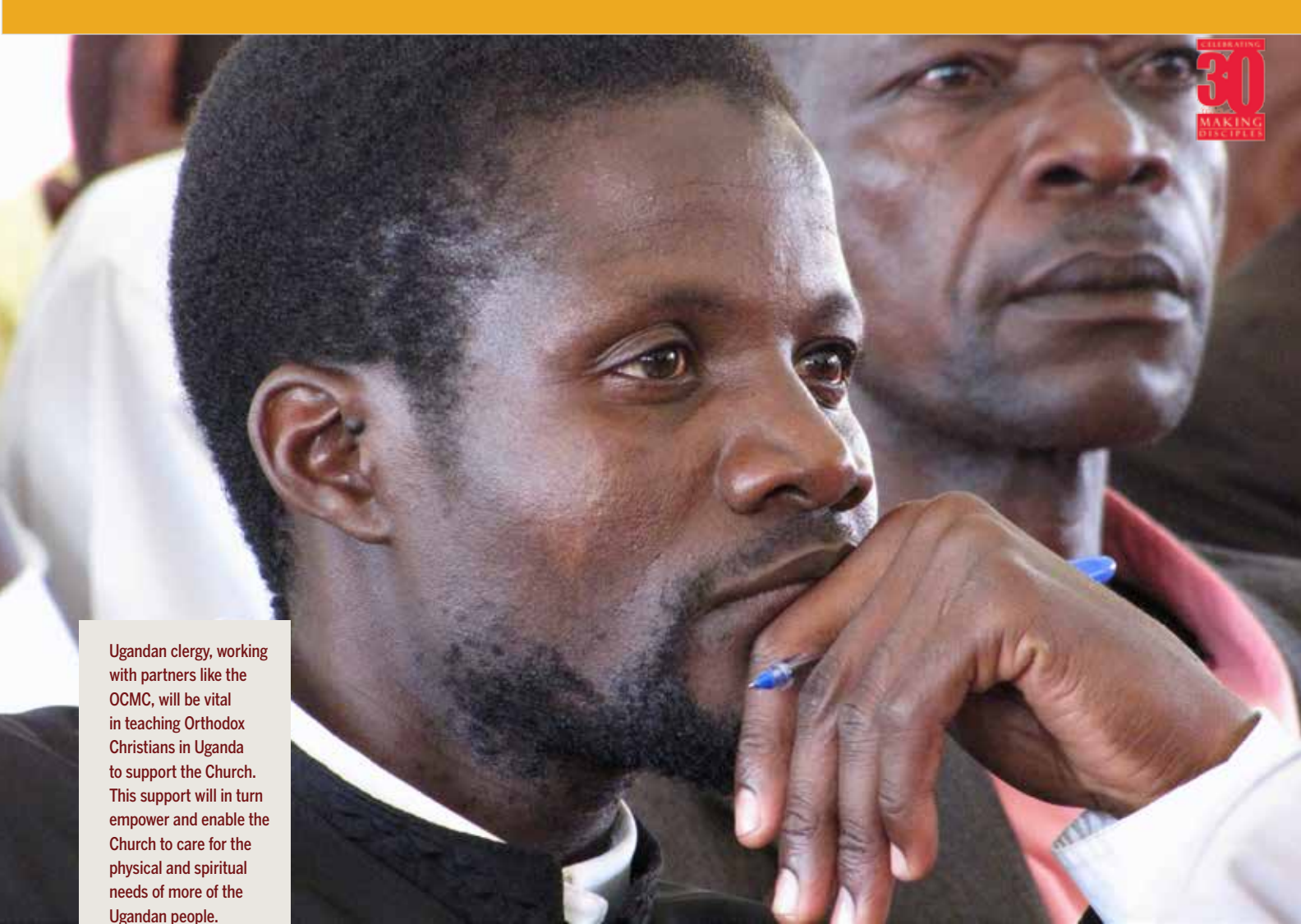
FAR LEFT: When OCMC first began, the thought of participating in the resurrection of an Autocephalous Church such as Albania was beyond our means. Today, this is one example of the progress made over the past 30 years.

LEFT: Addressing self-support is an exciting area OCMC has focused on in recent years. In Uganda, clergy and parish representatives are deeply involved in addressing this issue and reflecting upon how to go forward.

BOTTOM LEFT: As Churches established on many continents mature, they have the potential to become mission-sending Churches. First, the ability to meet basic needs, such as support and training of clergy, along with funding their hierarchs and national ministries must be tackled.



Evangelism and establishment of the Orthodox Church in Turkana, Kenya, are a testimony and symbolic statement of the growth of Orthodox missions and the work of OCMC.



Ugandan clergy, working with partners like the OCMC, will be vital in teaching Orthodox Christians in Uganda to support the Church. This support will in turn empower and enable the Church to care for the physical and spiritual needs of more of the Ugandan people.

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN UGANDA

Moving Towards Self-Support

by Fr. Dr. Nicholas Bayego

The Orthodox Church in Uganda was started by two indigenous Ugandans, namely Spartas Sebanja and Obadiah Basajjakitalo in the early 1900's. It was a time when two Christian denominations, the Roman Catholics and the Protestants, were at each other's necks while also at war with the Muslims. It was at this prime time that Spartas stumbled onto "Orthodoxy" as the True Church, and the Mother Church. He pursued this to its logical conclusion through searching in any book or journal he laid his hands on. After reading one newsletter in 1924, by the name "Negro World", he wrote to the-then leader of the African Orthodox Church in

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN UGANDA

America, George McQuire. He did not receive a reply until the 6th of January, 1929. Following that initial contact the African Orthodox Church was in Uganda (known at that time as the Kingdom of Buganda). An African independent church among many was established. The period from establishment in 1926 to official acceptance by the Greek Patriarchate of Alexandria in 1946 was marked by fast growth in terms of number of adherents, land acquisition, construction of grass-thatched places of worship, and leadership. From 1959, with the enthronement of the first Greek Orthodox Metropolitan, to 1987, growth slowed, but the true Orthodox Christian faith had been planted. This period also marked the beginning and growth of “dependence syndrome”. From 1987, under Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos (then-metropolitan of the Holy Archbishopric of Irinoupolis under the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria), Ugandan men called to the priesthood would get their theological training abroad at seminaries like Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology in the United States. The church also received much-needed support from young Orthodox missionaries from the USA.



LEFT: Fr. Dr. Nicholas Bayego has witnessed some of the spectacular growth within the Orthodox Church in Uganda since its establishment in 1926. Going forward, he and other Church leaders, with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Jonah, are trying to establish a culture of stewardship within the Church that will help it to be more self-reliant.

In 1990, when Archbishop Anastasios was transferred to Albania, we began to despair of his departure, but Fr. Martin Ritsi consoled us, saying, “If Bishop Anastasios did a good job, then the Church will continue to grow in Uganda.” His words were very prophetic, and the Orthodox Church in East Africa has grown substantially in many ways.

In 1997, Bishop Jonah Lwanga was elevated and made the Metropolitan of Kampala and All Uganda. He has made many serious strides in the Lord’s Vineyard. These past and present developments are important to our future direction and orientation. Now in Uganda, we have many positive ministries: a seminary, 39 nursery schools, 59 primary schools, 18 advanced secondary schools; one hospital, and 10 clinics.

BELOW: As financial support from Europe and the United States slowed during the recent global economic crisis, the Church in Uganda realized that it needed to take steps to become less dependent. The Church is bringing in experts from Uganda and the United States to help advise on the steps it can take to be more self-reliant.



Despite these visible or tangible developments, there are many challenges; therefore, there is a need to draw lessons learned from our past experiences. It is one thing to learn and another to unlearn. In the past, most of these developments have come around to us through assistance and donations from abroad, especially from our Sister Churches in Greece and the USA. Assistance has come in the form of help in building churches, schools, and clinics; payment of school fees for orphans and needy children, tuition for Ugandan Orthodox students abroad, and priests’ monthly allowances; medicines and healthcare services; and teaching teams. All these have been welcome and appreciated, but much of this support has not been planned by the local Church. It has in some way placed us in “bondage”. Bondage should not negatively be understood. Here, “dependence syndrome” is synonymous with “bondage”. The Ugandan Orthodox Church must break through the “comfort zone” of depending on others. We realized this when our brothers and sisters abroad became impoverished as a result of the world economic crisis, which meant our receiving of support had come to end.

The saying that “it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks” holds true in our present situation in Uganda. Could it be true that, just as the departure of Archbishop Anastasios was a blessing in disguise, that the world economic crisis will also be a blessing to the Orthodox Churches in Africa, especially in Uganda? All Orthodox bishops and priests have been getting a portion of their salaries from the Orthodox Church in Greece through the organization Apostoliki Diakonia, but this is now no longer the case. The stipend received from OCMC, given the growing number of priests, is now a drop in the bucket of what is needed for a priest and his family to survive. Our faith is still strong. Did not our Lord feed the 5,000 men (without counting women and children) with 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread (Mark 9, 10-17). We can draw lessons from an old proverb: give me fish, I will come for more tomorrow, but teach me how to fish, I will fish for



ABOVE: Fr. Jonah Lwanga was made the Metropolitan of Kampala and All Uganda in 1997. He has significantly bolstered the ministries of the Church in Uganda by building schools, clinics, and a seminary. He is guiding the faithful of Uganda to care for and grow these vital ministries.

myself every day. Developed countries give donations to the less developed countries with strings attached, but this is not so with the Sister Orthodox Churches. The aim is the fulfillment of our Lord Jesus Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28, 16-20).

To start on a long journey - say 1,000 miles - one needs a first step. The first step most of the time is the hardest. A baby's first steps need a helping hand through training, encouragement, and reinforcement from a parent. It has to be a step-by-step movement from dependency to independence. For a child to be able to walk straight, to eat with its own hands or use a fork, write or read, speak complete and comprehensible sentences, and many other things in those categories, requires a parent's helping hand. Additionally, for children to pass on to full woman or manhood, there must be guidance.

The Orthodox Church in Uganda has the name, per say, of Holy Metropolis of Kampala and All Uganda, but we are highly indebted to other Churches. Is the word indebted an understatement? Should we be saying that we are over-dependent on other Sister Churches? The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of

Alexandria and All Africa, as our Mother Church, has high hope in us, but we have not yet lived up to that expectation. If we cannot pay, as a Ugandan Church, our bishop, priests, catechists, or widowed clergy wives, we are in a serious situation which needs serious attention before the good Mother and big Sister Churches can be less depended upon.

Areas of partnership

To move a step forward toward self-support, we need a Christ-centered perspective. As long as we know what is expected of us by our Master, the master planner, it is easy to articulate the proper assistance needed from other Sister Churches. The areas we would need to have partnership include:

1. Education, stewardship, and poverty alleviation

Africans are refugees in their own continent, and many are trying their best to exit to western countries for greener pastures. We are divided along tribal and clan groupings; call it nepotism. All year long we are in internal conflicts and unnecessary civil wars. Besides, we

are inflicted and affected by diseases, and most especially by HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. Democracy is still elusive as ever, and poverty is on the increase. What a paradox that Africa is the richest continent, yet the majority of its people live under abject poverty!! Many Africans see Africa as a cursed continent from a western perspective. "Will you see others in a hostile way, believing that this 'other' is outside the love of God, or will you see it as another form of His own providence?" Archbishop Anastasios sees stewardship as a love language.

A new stewardship approach for Africa would require us to unlearn what we have previously learned. To move out from the vicious circle of poverty is not an easy thing. Illiteracy, ignorance, and disease are forms of bondage or slavery. As it was not easy for the Prophet Moses to convince the Israelites who thought they lived a life of abject poverty in the desert compared to the life they had in Egypt, so will it be with the Orthodox Christians in Uganda. Many people have come to the Orthodox Church as refugees from the Roman Catholic or Protestant Churches which highly taxed them. The Orthodox Church is seen



LEFT: Instilling a sense of community among the Orthodox youth of Uganda is vital to the Church becoming more self-sufficient. Young people from across the country can bond in fellowship and work together to grow the Body of Christ.

naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?

Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2, 15-17). We need to teach people to give to God to perpetuate the mission of God on earth, but at the same time it is imperative that we help them to get out of the vicious circle of poverty. Stewardship can lead to the establishment of poverty alleviation programs in individual parishes. The programs should foster group solidarity, team work, and giving back to God. If the Church communities are helped to provide for their own needs and the needs of their parish priest, they will eventually be able to provide for their Bishop and the entire Metropolis' mission work. In other words, a family and community work model can be envisaged as a development of a parish Church, a form of self-support, self-reliance, and self-ministering to the glory of God. It will be self-propagating in terms of creation of new Orthodox communities in Uganda.

Orthodox children should also be taught, not only about God and His Church, but to grow together in solidarity and Orthodox spirituality with other Orthodox children. As they grow together, they will learn to help each other, identify together the available resources or facilities at their disposal, such as schools, clinics, land, human resources, and the like to further God's mission.

2. Seminary and the Orthodox Christian University

In the last 20 years, the Orthodox Church in Uganda has been running a simple seminary under the name of St. Paul Orthodox Seminary. Originally, its campus was at Degeya, in Luweero district, but later transferred to Kampala at the St. Nicholas Cathedral parish. His Eminence Metropolitan Jonah has the vision that the present seminary be upgraded to a university starting with three departments, namely, Theology, Education, and Nursing. The three areas reflect the areas of manpower most needed in the Church. In order to make this vision a reality, the Namungoona

as a Church of charity and love where Christians are given free baptismal dresses, new shoes, and school fees for their many children, and many other free handouts. "Our Father who art Heaven...give us our daily bread..." makes more sense.

This will require us to teach extensively about stewardship using the language of love. This language of love is well expressed in the words of the Apostle James, our Lord's brother and the first Bishop of Jerusalem, saying: "If a brother or sister is

Orthodox Primary School, the Holy Cross Hospital, and St. Nicholas Spiritual Center facilities will be converted to university facilities. In August of 2015, it is hoped that the university will be accepting its first admissions, God-willing.

The Orthodox Church in Uganda has seen rapid growth over the past 17 years in terms of new converts, new priests, and schools and clinics built. On the other hand, the level of education of both old and new priests is considerably low, and the number of Orthodox staff in our schools and clinics is terribly low. For our Church to grow toward self-reliance, we need to have enough trained personnel to run our own institutions and facilities. Currently, the salaries paid out to staff members in our institutions ends up in the hands of other denominational churches and non-Orthodox families. Tithe collection from these institutions is not forthcoming, because those utilizing our facilities do not share our mission, or rather we have not been successful in implementing the necessary strategies to achieve our desired and Christ-centered goals. At the end of the day, the Orthodox Christians' families and their priests have remained impoverished.

Through the university, we intend to increase the number of priests and the number of locally trained Orthodox personnel to run our institutions and facilities. We believe this will help

BOTTOM: There are many ways for the Church in Uganda to become more self-sufficient. Most parishes in Uganda sit on acres of arable land, which can be used to grow crops that can be sold in support of the local community.

grow income and improve planning and administration of our Church. To achieve those

desired goals, we shall also need to partner with organizations like the OCMC to get mission volunteers as instructors and administrators, books for the libraries, and financial assistance to construct instructors' and students' residential houses.

3. Agriculture

Most of the individual parishes of the Orthodox Church in Uganda have plenty of land ranging from 2 to 25 acres or more, but most of the land has not been fully put to use in terms of farming. Crops, cattle, goats, pigs, or chicken farms could be set up if there were proper planning and mobilization in the spirit of stewardship.

4. Housing Project

The world economic crisis has opened our eyes to critically look at the future of our Church. At present, most Ugandan clergy are young men in their early twenties and thirties and are newly married. They have no other profession. With no monthly stipend and high living costs, these young families are in a compromising and vulnerable situation. The Metropolis has had an ambitious plan to construct a housing estate which could easily fetch some constant income; that income could assist in running the Metropolis and pay the priests some kind of stipend. This additional source of income will give local communities time to learn and come up with the strategies to support their priests.

Have we passed the first phase? Is it time for the Church of Greece and the OCMC to leave us on our own because

they have done enough? I will conclude with two stories from the OCMC's facilitators during the Stewardship Workshop at St. Nicholas Spiritual Center hosted in Kampala in December 2012. One was about Alexander the Great who had one day passed a beggar by the roadside and was asked for alms by him. The man was poor and wretched and had no claim upon the ruler, no right even to lift a solicitous hand. Yet the Emperor threw him several gold coins. A Courtier was astonished at his generosity and commented. "Sir, copper coins would adequately meet a beggar's need. Why give him gold?" Alexander responded in royal fashion, "Copper coins would suit the beggar's need, but gold coins suit Alexander's giving". And another story: there was an elderly carpenter who was ready to retire. The carpenter told his employer-contractor of his plans to leave the house-building business and live a more leisurely life with his wife, enjoying his extended family. He would miss the paycheck, but he needed to retire. The contractor was sorry to see his good worker go and asked if he could build just one more house as a personal favor. The carpenter said yes, but in time it was easy to see that his heart was not in his work. He resorted to shoddy workmanship and used inferior materials. It was an unfortunate way to end a dedicated career. When the carpenter finished his work the employer came to inspect the house, he handed the front door key to the carpenter. "This is your house," he said, "my gift to you." The carpenter was shocked! What a shame! If he had only known he was building his own house, he would have done it all so differently.

We are not saying that shoddy work has been done, but some programs could have been done differently. Your Church is our Church, and our Church is your Church. With boldness we profess that there is no other place where hope, peace, love, and life can be found in its fullness, except in the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church of Christ. In our struggle to make another bold step as children before our big sisters, we request your big helping hand now to make a difference, for who knows God's providence whether tomorrow it will be us the Orthodox Church in Africa to give the undeserving hand to the Orthodox Church in America!





EMPOWERING THE FAITHFUL:

*Helping Albanian Farmers to
Receive Training in Beekeeping*

by Emily Robertson

On a hillside in Gjinar in the Shapti region of Albania, a young woman named Esma Derstila lives with four family members in a very simple home on a beautiful farm. Like many breadwinners in Albania, her husband works abroad seasonally to secure income for their family, while she and her son live with her husband's family. Through an initiative funded by OCMC and run by Diakonia Agapes (the social, development, and relief office of the Orthodox Autocephalous church of Albania) with the blessing of His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios, people like Esma are learning how to be beekeepers on their farms to help their families bring in more income and become more self-reliant, independent, and empowered.

The Farmers' Empowerment Through Beekeeping program has assisted farmers in the Gjinar commune in 2014. Throughout the year, low-income farmers were being trained technically in beekeeping and were provided with the necessary supplies for building and maintaining successful bee colonies. Among the beneficiaries of this program were very poor families who receive economic aid. The project worked directly with 20 farmers (11 women and 9 men), but indirectly the initiative benefited 100 people, including the family members of these farmers.

“Now, with the help of the specialist I will again have strong colonies which will produce honey.”

— PERAPARIM MUFALI

Beekeeping is a major source of income of many families in Albania because the area is good for the profession. Forage is excellent, and summers are hot and dry. Honey is highly valued - especially for children - and demand is good, which helps keep prices high. In areas where agriculture has been disrupted in Albania, beekeeping, and especially honey production, offer quick returns compared with keeping cattle or growing crops.

Since the 1990's, beekeepers have experienced problems and seen their income from beekeeping decline. In Albania, the problem post-Communism is one of access to supplies and to up-to-date information on disease prevention. The Farmers' Empowerment Through Beekeeping project addresses these issues and makes it possible for farmers to now successfully maintain beekeeping as a productive, healthy, profitable aspect of their farms.

Through this initiative, Esma and the other participating farmers are able to do something profitable for their families. Alexandria Ritsi, OCMC long-term missionary to Albania, visited the region in July to see the initiative at work. She was able to sit in on the educational aspect of the initiative and then was able to go out to the bee houses to see the new beekeepers honing these skills. After the meeting, Alexandria was able to visit Esma's house and see where she is implementing what she learned in the beekeeping program. Alexandria said, “Seeing in her eyes the feeling of independence and empowerment was amazing! Beekeeping is a job she can now use to help provide for the income of her family. It was an initiative that she took upon herself, and through the support of her in-laws and husband, she will be a beekeeper. This was only possible through the beekeeping initia-

tive of OCMC and Diakonia Agapes.”

There are great hopes for this project and the impact it will have on many farmers and their family members' lives. Not only is beekeeping an affordable and profitable business due to its small space requirement and low start-up investment, but it is also an activity that does not require extra physical strength, which makes it perfect for many women in farming to be able to contribute.

During the initiative, training is provided for each farmer, in addition to providing bee colonies to get started. Each participant contributed up to 25% of the cost of the bee colony they were provided for the project. Training was very important, especially for those who had tried beekeeping before and not been successful.

Through the project, an attentive trainer who is very motivated provides participants with knowledge of major issues in beekeeping, such as division of the bee colonies. If not done correctly, there is damage to and reduction of bee colonies. Peraparim Mufali, one of the trainees who had problems with his colonies before participating in the program, said, “I tried to separate the colony and unfortunately I lost it. I was not offering the needed services to the colonies. I was not taking care of them in an appropriate way. Now, with the help of the specialist I will again have strong colonies which will produce honey.”

Antoneta Karaj is another female farmer from Gjinar village who has benefited from beekeeping training. She was provided artificial honeycombs and 5 bee families. She was able to increase her number of bee families, emphasizing that her success came due to the knowledge gained in training and medical treatment from the consulting specialist during her

RIGHT: Aleks Berdufi learned new ways of beekeeping through the Farmers' Empowerment Through Beekeeping project, allowing him to increase his number of bees, honey production, and ultimately his family's income.



LEFT: Antoneta Karaj is one of many female farmers who have been empowered through the beekeeping initiative, giving her a way to help her low-income farming family to make more money and become more self-sustainable.

RIGHT: OCMC raised \$14,125 through a social media fundraiser for The Farmers' Empowerment Through Beekeeping program which is assisting farmers in the Gjinar commune in Albania in 2014. Throughout this year, low-income farmers are being trained technically in beekeeping and are being provided with the necessary supplies for building and maintaining successful bee colonies.



time with the program. She also learned how to feed the bees in the winter. All of this resulted in her increasing her honey production. She was able to sell this honey to the local market, increasing her family's income by 50%.

A key aspect of the Farmers' Empowerment Through Beekeeping project is that beekeepers are not just trained and left with no support. The goal of this program is to provide ongoing training and consulting. Farmers are then able to pass their knowledge of beekeeping along to others. The long-term reach and influence of this project will be far spread.

"Seeing in her eyes the feeling of independence and empowerment was amazing!"

— ALEXANDRIA RITSI

Aleks Berdufi is a farmer from Pash-tresh Village in the Gjinar commune who has completed the beekeeping training cycle in the past. His family has a tradition of beekeeping, but due to a disease, all of his bee colonies were damaged. Participation in the program gave him the opportunity to learn about newer, more contemporary ways of keeping, how to care for the bees better, and to learn about seasonal treatments which prevent disease. He was not only supplied with artificial honeycombs to improve honey quality, but he also was able to increase his number of bee families. Honey quality was improved, and quantity increased. As a result, he was able to increase his income as well as the income of those in his family, whom he was able to train with his new knowledge.

In addition to the support offered directly through the program, the initiative has been set up so that farmers can consult with and help each other as well. The exchange of information and knowledge among old farmers and young ones, those who are more experienced and those just getting started, those who have raised bees before and those who have not, has been instrumental in making this project a success for so many in the area. The farmers can all rely on each other for support and information so that many in the region can become more self-reliant.

One of OCMC's core values is helping the communities it serves around the world to become more self-reliant. In



ABOVE: Training was very important, especially for those who had tried beekeeping before and not been successful. Through the Church of Albania's beekeeping project, which is supported by the Mission Center, an attentive trainer who is very motivated provides participants with knowledge of major issues in beekeeping.

conjunction with bringing the Orthodox Faith to those who have yet to hear it, the Mission Center has also been involved in supporting mission projects since its inception. As evidenced by the beekeeping initiative in Albania, OCMC has recently begun to advance more initiatives and projects that target self-reliance and empowerment of the faithful.

As OCMC celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, it is a good time for reflection on how missions has changed over that time, how fundraising has evolved, and how much awareness has spread about the work being done. It is faster and easier than ever to be involved in the missions work being done through OCMC.

The funds sent by the OCMC for the Farmers' Empowerment Through Bee-

BELOW: Esma Derstila signs a contract for the bee hives she received for participating in the Farmers' Empowerment Through Beekeeping program facilitated by the Orthodox Church in Albania and sponsored by OCMC. She is one of the many farmers who are learning how to be beekeepers on their farms to help their families bring in more income and become more self-reliant, independent, and empowered.



keeping initiative provided to Diakonia Agapes were raised entirely through a social media fundraiser that ran in the months of June and July this year. In that time \$14,125 was raised on Facebook and Twitter to support this very important project. Recently, social media and its influ-

ence have been integral to fundraising and the implementation of projects at OCMC. Social media has had a huge impact over the past couple of years, and that influence will hopefully only continue to grow.

Social media has changed the landscape for awareness and missions immensely. When OCMC's Agape Canister program started 25 years ago, individuals placed collection boxes in restaurants, stores, and other businesses with large volumes of foot traffic. Members of the public were invited to support humanitarian efforts globally by dropping coins and bills into the boxes, which were collected by volunteers who forwarded the funds to the Mission Center. Today, OCMC's online presence and influence in social media has changed the method of quickly raising funds and awareness for these humanitarian projects, making it easier than ever for the faithful of North America to implement these initiatives around the world.

These projects are important! Through self-sustainability projects, the OCMC is able to demonstrate the teachings of Christ to those in need not just through simply doing work for them, but by showing them how to help themselves. Making it better and easier for low-income families around the world to do more for themselves is one of the most loving things we have to offer.

Low-income farmers and their families in Albania who have been directly impacted by the influence of the beekeeping project are evidence of the importance of supporting projects like this one. Self-sustainability projects allow people around the world to obtain knowledge and use it to become independent, strong, self-reliant, and empowered. The gift of knowledge is one that can last forever and is something the OCMC will continue to support in the years to come.

To participate in OCMC's social media communities that made this project possible, find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OrthodoxChristianMissionCenter or Twitter at www.twitter.com/ocmc.

ENSURING THE FUTURE: *Entrepreneurial Mission Priests*

by Markella Balasis

Serving as a mission priest brings indescribable joy through the act of sharing the love of Christ with others. When they are asked to describe what they enjoy most about their priestly ministry, nearly every priest supported through the OCMC's Support a Mission Priest program offers this response. Yet feeling such joy does not make the priest's material needs disappear, nor those of his family. The Apostle Paul affirms the necessity to provide for the needs of the clergy: "Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?" (1st Corinthians 9:7)

Most mission parishes where our SAMP priests serve, especially in Africa, are not able to offer much financial support to their priests. Many communities are primarily engaged in outreach and evangelism efforts, so they do not have a stable base of parishioners who fund the parish budget through their donations, such as one might find at an established Orthodox parish in North America. Furthermore, those established parishes are themselves relatively new, perhaps just 5 or 10 years old, often without a permanent church building. Such parishes and communities lack the means to sustain a priest and his family full-time.

Instead, the local diocese offers to the mission priest a monetary stipend, the majority of which comes from overseas donations. Over the past few years, since the widespread economic recession severely impacted places like Greece and Cyprus that had contributed large portions of this funding, these stipends have been reduced substantially. The SAMP program provides an additional portion of the priest's income, but represents only a percentage of what he would need to receive in order to make ends meet. As the stipend is not enough to provide for him and his family, the priest likely has to find work elsewhere.

OCMC has begun partnering with the Orthodox Archdiocese of Kenya to explore one solution to this problem by establishing local businesses through which priests can earn income. OCMC provides funding to cover the start-up costs for construction and purchase of equipment and supplies. Once the business is up and running, the income covers the operating expenses and provides a profit for the priest owning the business. The priest is able to operate the business locally, establishing rapport with his customers because they trust that he will charge them

fairly. Interacting with customers can even offer some unique opportunities for outreach ministry. Above all, the business allows the priest to provide for his family.

One such "entrepreneurial" priest is Fr. Zachariah Navyongorot Echeme, one of the SAMP priests serving in the remote Turkana area of Kenya. Fr. Zachariah is heavily involved in evangelism efforts in the region to reach new villages, while also shepherding two permanent communities, St. Luke in Lokichaar and St. Peter in Loupwala. Fr. Zachariah is wholeheartedly dedicated to serving as a priest, but he recognizes the financial burden this places on his wife and children.

This year, through private individual donations, OCMC has offered a grant to Fr. Zachariah to establish a grain mill in Lokichaar. While few crops actually grow in the region, many people purchase bulk sacks of whole maize that must be ground at a mill before they can use it. In Lokichaar, Fr. Zachariah constructed a mud and stick building to house the mill and has found a caretaker to safeguard the building. The mill began operating in mid-2014 and has offered great hope to Fr. Zachariah, his family, as well as his community. He writes, "It will support my family and the parish by providing food for the family and the needy; it will pay school fees for my kids and medical care for both needy parishioners and my family."

The support of mission priests like Fr. Zachariah has been a cornerstone program of the OCMC in its thirty-year history. The SAMP program has always invested in the future of clergy who preach the gospel overseas. As the needs of today continue to change, our ways of assisting mission priests must also evolve to reflect their circumstances and empower them to care for their material needs so that they may continue sharing the love of Christ.



Fr. Zachariah censuring during an outdoor service in a Turkana village.

BELOW: Equipment for Fr. Zachariah's grain mill has been purchased and installed in Lokichaar.



ABOVE: Entrepreneurial enterprises like Fr. Zachariah's grain mill can help priests to support their families while providing much-needed services to the community.



Fr. Zachariah constructed this building out of mud and sticks to house the grain mill.

ESTABLISHING SOLID FOUNDATIONS:

The Strong Ministry Outreach of the Orthodox Church in Romania

by Floyd Frantz

I first came to Romania in 1998, at the invitation of Craig and Victoria Goodwin, two OCMC Missionaries who were starting an orphanage for abandoned children in a village just outside Cluj, where I am currently assigned. It was a personal trip, just to explore the area and to find out more about their work and the Romanian people. What I found was a culture struggling to catch up with the modern world after having lived under Communism for nearly 50 years. Because of my specialization in addictions counseling, I was made most welcome, especially by the priests and doctors that I met. The people were very nice, hospitable, and generally open-minded about our western approach to treating alcoholism. I decided to return for one year to set up a model out-patient counseling program in 2000, and I have been here ever since. I can relate to the man mentioned in Matthew 13:44, who found a great treasure in a field. He then went out and sold all that he had, and he bought the field.

It truly has been a great joy for me to have been a long-term missionary with OCMC. Over these past fourteen years I have witnessed the Romanian Orthodox Church develop and build hundreds of new churches and to begin again its traditional role of offering physical and spiritual healing to the Romanian people. The greatest joy for me, however, has been that I have been able to be a part of this change, and even to have contributed to it, in my own small way.

The counseling program that we started in 2000, the St. Dimitrie Program (SDP), was well accepted by the Archbishop of Cluj, but not so much by his priests at first. He was

ABANDONMENT OF CHILDREN IS STILL A BIG PROBLEM IN ROMANIA.

trying to send some of them to us for counseling, and they thought that we were on a witch hunt and practicing some Protestant cult teaching. After years of work, trainings, and

short-term mission teams from the United States (some of them Orthodox priests and university professors) coming to help, the program was finally accepted. In the Cluj Archdiocese we now have five Orthodox priests acting as volunteers in our program and offering spiritual and pastoral counseling to our client group. In northern Romania we are now helping to develop a new coun-

seling program, and we have priests that are themselves now in recovery helping us with the project. This is being developed under the Archdiocese of Iasi, with me acting only as an advisor. We hope to be offering this program to other dioceses around Romania next year. We believe that eventually it will open up the possibilities for offering lay persons in Romania the opportunity to have dependency treated in a residential setting using modern methods, and based in traditional Orthodox spirituality.

So what about the orphanage that I came to visit in 1998? In 1999, the Church took over operation of the St. Nicholas Orphanage, and Craig and Victoria Goodwin, OCMC Missionaries at that time, started what is today the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center (PTFC). Today it is managed by my lovely wife, Ancuta. The focus of the PTFC is the prevention of abandonment of children by their mothers just after birth.

Abandonment of children is still a big problem in Romania because of the poverty, especially with the minority Roma population. The PTFC is a very nice project, currently serving more than 40 “at risk” families. At the beginning, it was totally funded by your donations through OCMC. Today your support is still important, but it is now largely funded through local grants and donations from inside Romania. Other OCMC missionaries have made important contributions as well.

In 1999, Fr. David and Psa. Mary Hudson started what is now the St. Basil the Great Social Center to help kids that have dropped out of school to regain their place in the educational network. Today, it has a soup kitchen (still partially supported through OCMC donations), a youth program, chapel, and other services directed towards the youth in the Manastur district of Cluj. Although it is now almost entirely funded by the Church and the local government, it could not have started without the presence of the Hudsons and the support of your donations through OCMC. Today the Orthodox Church manages and supports this activity.

Also with start-up funding through OCMC, the Archdiocese of Cluj opened the Policlinica St. Pantelimon, which offers free medical and pharmaceutical care to the poor living in the Manastur district of Cluj. Several OCMC Missionaries have been involved with this clinic over the years, and the St. Dimitrie Program is still using it as a headquarters for its outpatient counseling program. It was taken over by the Church almost from the beginning and, although funded through OCMC for several years, is now totally supported through the Romanian Orthodox Church. There are other programs here in Cluj that have followed the lead set by OCMC missionaries, including a hospice for those in the final stages of life, a shelter for the aged, a day-center with a cantina for the aged. Currently the Church is building a residential youth center for teenagers that are either abandoned by their parents or for other reasons cannot live at home. Given that even today there are “street kids” in Romania, this is an important program.



LEFT: Ancuta Frantz (right) serves as the director of the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center (PTFC) which serves unwed Romanian mothers by providing them with childcare and other services as they seek the means to care for their young children.



RIGHT: Since Floyd Frantz first arrived as an Orthodox missionary in Romania more than 15 years ago, he has helped the Church to establish much-needed ministries. Here, Bishop Vasilie and other guests attend the opening of the St. Dimitrie Day-Center.

THERE REMAINS A SHORTAGE OF CHURCHES IN ROMANIA. ON SUNDAY MANY PEOPLE MUST STAND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH BUILDING AND LISTEN TO THE LITURGY ON LOUDSPEAKERS.

None of this would have been possible without the activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church. And, even though it has been 25 years since the ending of Communism, its effects on the Church and the Romanian society are still evident. There remains a shortage of churches in Romania. On Sunday many people must stand outside the church building and listen to the Liturgy on loudspeakers. There simply is not enough money for the needed construction. I attend a church that has been trying to build the church building for over 10 years. We finally have the basement in, and hope to use it for Liturgy starting this fall. The dilemma of the Church is in deciding if there will be a new church or if there will be funding for a social program. Romania remains one of the poorest countries in Europe, and this economic situation impacts the decisions made by the Church. I believe that they are attempting to find a balance and to fill each need as they are able. The people here are patient, and they seem to be understanding of the difficulties that the Church is facing.

The programs that I have described, and others I have not mentioned, indicate that the Romanian Church is healthy, and again taking Her traditional place in Romanian society and in the lives of Her people. I see this also in my own projects, where I have priests acting as spiritual counselors in a program that was once rejected by many of them as being a “cult”. Related to this, the Holy Synod of Romanian bishops endorsed and then published a book that I was involved in writing that explains the “disease” model of addictions and that it needs to be addressed as more than simply a moral issue. It also endorses programs like Alcoholics Anonymous, which in the past has been looked on with suspicion by many of the priests in the Church. Today our counseling program is known throughout Romania, and we are helping to do trainings for other dioceses so that they can start similar programs. But it is not only the Church that recognizes our projects.

In 2001 we began holding counseling groups in a psychiatric hospital here in Cluj, and in a long-term pulmonary care hospital in Savadisla. This hospital is primarily a tuberculosis (Tbc) hospital, and has many homeless or disenfranchised people living in it that have tuberculosis or other health problems. Many of these folks also suffer

BELOW: The Church in Romania has provided spiritual guidance and increased financial support to all of the ministries that have been developed by the Frantz family over the years. They now have the capacity to run and support many of these ministries on their own. Here, Ancuta and a group of mothers and children at the PTFC welcome Fr. Boca.

from alcohol dependency. After a few years of us working in this hospital, the doctor responsible for the Tbc hospitals in Cluj said at a public conference that the St. Dimitrie Program had “completely changed the atmosphere” of the hospital. Today the St. Dimitrie Program is also offering “employee assistance programs” to businesses, and we are helping the Cluj county to start its first “diversion” program. This allows DUI offenders to come to treatment in place of jail time. We also assist the local university to educate and to train social workers by accepting their students as volunteers so that they can do their practicum work in our program.

Of course, it is understood that I do not do these programs alone. Actually, over the years it has been my staff members, the ones that will carry this program into the future, that have developed our network within the Church and in the community. They have acquired the abilities needed to manage the program, which they do very nicely when I am away in other places. In fact, because of my work in Moldova with our new project, I will be away quite a

lot for the next several months, and Metropolitan Andrei and I have designated one of my social workers to be the acting director of the St. Dimitrie Program. This allows me to step back from the St. Dimitrie Program here in Cluj and to spend more time developing it in other places, some of them outside Romania. This is something that I have put into God’s hands.

For today, I have work to do here in Romania, especially in Moldova. But even there I am helping to develop a program with priests that I have known for years, and who only need some ideas and encouragement for developing their project. It will be a residential program, which is very new to them, so they want me to help. Beyond this, I do not know where God will lead me. I have just returned from Serbia, where some folks want us to help them start an addictions program. Last year I had to turn down an invitation to teach at St. Herman Theological Seminary in Alaska, because I was so tied up here in Romania. But again, I have only today in which to live, and I do so in the hope that through your prayers and

BELOW: The children served by the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center (PTFC) have a safe place to call home. The PTFC offers many programs throughout the year that help these children feel loved. Here, a child smiles after receiving a gift at the PTFC Christmas celebration in 2013.

mine that our Lord will put me on His “Good Way”, to do His will, in His time.

BOTTOM: The need for mental health and substance abuse counseling in Romania is great. Floyd helped start up a new counseling center in Bacau.



Missionary *Updates*



OCMC Missionaries Dr. Jeffrey and Caryn Macdonald with their children and other missionaries serving in Albania.



OCMC Missionary Nathan Hoppe.



OCMC Missionary Anastasia Pamela Barksdale (left).

ALBANIA

Anastasia Pamela Barksdale

Anastasia Pamela Barksdale, after a brief furlough in the United States to share her work with her supporters, has returned to Albania for her fourth term of missionary service. She will continue to work for His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios at the Archdiocese in Tirana and teach Christian Education at the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy in Durres. The Christian Education Resource Center and Field Work program continues to grow by leaps and bounds. This year the program has increased from five to twelve catechism programs and five new youth ministry groups. As the Christian Education Instructor and Field Work Supervisor for the Academy, one of Anastasia's main roles has been to develop a teacher training program and practical teaching experiences for the students. She supervises these future teachers and catechists as they hold catechism classes and day camps in various cities and villages throughout the country. She is collaborating with fellow OCMC Missionary Dn. Stephanos Ritsi to extend the training to include youth ministry activities for five new youth groups that were established this year. Anastasia also offers seminars and Bible studies to university students and is the Missionary Liaison for the Children's Home of Hope. For the past three years she has hosted an OCMC Short-Term Mission Team in June to enrich the lives of the children and staff at the orphanage. This year an additional three-day staff development program was held at the end of the children's camp.



OCMC Missionaries Dn. Stephanos and Alexandria Ritsi with His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios of Albania

The Hoppe Family

The focus of the Hoppe family ministry this summer has been in the United States. During July and August the Hoppes traveled in 20 states from Michigan to California, visiting numerous churches and individuals in order to build up their support team in preparation for returning to Albania on September 1. The Hoppes had the joy of sharing the miracle that is in progress in Albania under the leadership of Archbishop Anastasios and asking the faithful to make the continued investment necessary to carry this work through. During this time the Hoppes challenged parishes to make a substantial ongoing investment in the work of missions by partnering with long-term missionaries. If parishes will invest in this way, it allows missionaries to network with a smaller number of parishes which has two significant benefits. First, it allows the missionary to devote more of their time to field ministry and less to support team development. Second, it fosters a closer relationship between the missionary and the sending community, which creates a greater sense

of ownership and excitement for the sending parish. As the Hoppes returned to Albania in September, they embarked on a very busy ministry season. Nathan will again be responsible for helping to organize the hosting of a significant Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative meeting in Albania for about 50 leaders from around the world. Nathan also traveled to Jordan in September for the latest meeting of the Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. Gabriela has been working with the children's and adolescent ministry teams to ramp up the fall programming. The Hoppes will be working together to support a new initiative in the Orthodox Church of Albania to foster dynamic parish life. They will also be working with the university ministry to launch a new coffee shop, underwritten by the OCMC's Agape Canister program, as a bridge for building relationships with students. Nathan will begin a new semester teaching Patrology at the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy in October.

The Macdonald Family

Dr. Jeffrey and Caryn Macdonald have completed their first year of teaching at the Resurrection Orthodox Theological Seminary and of living with their family in the village of Shen Vlash. Jeffrey taught Church History at the seminary and led an English Bible study for the faculty on the Gospel of John. Caryn taught English at the Seminary. This summer the Macdonalds helped out with several church camps. Caryn and their teenage daughter Elizabeth were part of the OCMC short-term mission team which ran the camp for

the Home of Hope. Jeffrey helped with two boys' camps, giving talks on the history of salvation in the Old Testament as part of this year's theme "God is with us", and a talk for the camp counselors on the practical and spiritual preparation needed for church work. The Macdonalds are also using the summer for Albanian language lessons while preparing for the new school year at the Seminary.

The Ritsi Family

Dn. Stephanos and Dkn. Alexandria Ritsi have had an eventful summer in Albania full of consecrations, summer camps, and OCMC teams! On June 1st, the Resurrection of Christ Cathedral was consecrated in Tirana. Together with Fr. Martin Ritsi, who was present for the occasion, and local priest Fr. Ilija, Dn. Stephanos was assigned the task to welcome and care for the visiting hierarchs from around the world that came to participate in this beautiful event. Alexandria was the official photographer for the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania. During this 3-day event, she felt honored to photograph next to Dimitrios S. Panagos from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. In addition, the Ritsis attended four other consecrations in Shkodra, Tirana, Aliko, and Këlcyrë. They were able to meet briefly with Fr. Luke Veronis' HCHC Missions Class, as well as the senior class of Holy Cross School of Theology on their pilgrimage. It was wonderful to reconnect with friends from seminary and to share with them their experience as new missionaries. They were also a part of the OCMC Home of Hope Team hosted by fellow missionary Anastasia Pamela Barksdale. Alexandria gave a presentation to the workers on Character Education. They then helped with summer camps in Durres, Saranda, and Elbasan. Now, Dn. Stephanos is working on building the internet ministry of the young adult group, creating the yearly schedule for the young adult office, and working on various events such as Bible studies, movie nights, and sports tournaments for the Tirana young adult group. Alexandria is preparing for teaching 6th and 8th grade English at the Protagonist School as well as working together with Dn. Stephanos and the young adults. She continues to learn about photography and assist the Church as a photographer. With the blessing of Archbishop Anastasios, they will also be working on an addendum to Lynette Hoppe's book, *Resurrection: The Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, 1991-2003*. At the end of September, they will welcome an OCMC Mission Team to Albania for a clergy wives' conference and retreat. Please keep them and the Albanian people in your prayers.

GUATEMALA

Fr. John & Presbyteria Alexandra Chakos

Fr. John Chakos continued his efforts to support and guide the Guatemalan clergy and faithful in this difficult period of mourning and readjustment after the loss of its dynamic

Please pray for OCMC Missionaries serving around the world. Visit the OCMC website at www.ocmc.org to learn more about their various ministries and to offer your support so that they may continue to answer the call to make disciples of all nations on behalf of the Orthodox Christian Church.

leader, Fr. Andres Giron. One project of special note has been the plan to build, equip, and staff a much-needed medical clinic in the village of Aguacate, near the border with Mexico. The materials have been ordered, and construction is slated to begin shortly with the help of the One World, One Community Foundation. In early June, Fr. John led an OCMC team of church musicians that traveled to a number of Mayan villages, teaching the music of the Divine Liturgy and major feasts of the Church in Spanish. Team members continue to send additional hymns in support of this ongoing project. A recent two-day catechetical seminar at the Centro Apostolico highlighted the first-ever release of an Orthodox Church Calendar in Spanish, featuring key parts of the Divine Liturgy, daily Scripture readings, lives of the saints, and their festal hymns. Fr. John introduced the newly-published text that each catechist will take back to his or her village. Since early July, Presbyteria Alexandra has resumed filling orders for liturgical vestments and adornments with Mayan seamstresses, using Guatemalan-made ecclesiastical fabrics. Having recently launched a new Web site, www.mayanartisanstudios.com, they are able

BELOW: OCMC Missionary Fr. John Chakos (right).



BELOW: OCMC Missionary Mat. Rozanne Rucker



to take orders online. Besides providing a livelihood for the underprivileged women of the village, the program generates much-needed income for the Church. Fr. John continues to accompany the local clergy in their weekly parish visitations, performing sacraments and offering encouragement and support to the long-suffering faithful, who happily realize that they now belong to the canonical Church that is firmly rooted in ancient Christianity.

Fr. David & Mat. Rozanne Rucker

It was a great privilege to accompany one of the largest Orthodox parishes in Guatemala through their first Orthodox Great Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha. Can you imagine a congregation of 1,200 people and not one of them, including the local priest, had ever experienced Orthodox Pascha, let alone any of the Holy Week services? We raised up a choir of 40 people, spending long days and nights in preparation not only teaching how the services are done but most importantly what the hymns and services mean. We explained that they, as a choir, would be helping to teach the services to the rest of the congregation. Every service, every day is an opportunity to become the Lord's disciples as we make disciples in Central America.

The Ruckers returned to Florida at the beginning of June for a full schedule of meetings, in spite of the fact that Mat. Rozanne has been diagnosed with Tropical Sprue following a severe bout with parasites. She continues treatment for this and is under her doctor's care. These meetings in the USA are a vital part of our ministry as Mission Specialists, allowing us to teach, encourage, and learn from parishes in the USA. We know the needs are great everywhere, including parishes right here in our homeland. Our unique ministry gives us the opportunity to bring churches in the USA and Central America closer together. Thank you for your prayers and offerings which always sustain and enable us! We plan to be back in Guatemala in October, God-willing.

BELOW: OCMC Mission Specialists the Colburn Family



KENYA

The Colburn Family

The Colburn's OCMC ministry is to equip and train native translators with the knowledge and tools they need to make accurate and understandable translations of liturgical texts. Their strategy is threefold—software tools, a liturgical translation course, and liturgical translator's handbooks. The initial version of AGES Liturgical Workbench provides the first software tools they had planned, with more to come. The Translations and Publications Office of the Archdiocese of Kenya recently began using the software to create bilingual versions of a Priest's Service Book. Next, Michael plans to start work on the first liturgical translator's handbook—the Hymns of Theophany. He will do this as a Doctor of Theology student at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, Greece. The advantages of this include: the opportunity to learn modern Greek through immersion—useful for communication with Greek-speaking Hierarchs; the degree will be earned by research only; there is no tuition to pay; the research will focus on the theological, liturgical, and linguistics considerations in the translation of the hymns of theophany, and be tested in Africa; and the location in Thessaloniki reduces travel distances and costs to not just Africa, but Albania and Romania, where Michael and Lisa hope to also introduce the use of AGES software.

Meg Engelbach

Meg (Fotini) continues studying the Kikuyu language with various local families. At the same time she is being trained in the AGES software and doing other projects to make the translations of the divine services available to the public.

MONGOLIA

Kurt Bringerud

Greetings from Mongolia! I have just returned to Mongolia after a very busy two-month furlough in the US (it's hard to believe I've been living in Mongolia for two years already!) during which time I visited relatives and friends in the states of New York and Florida (not to mention OCMC) as well as my home state of Indiana. I also found a young couple in my home church in Indianapolis who were interested in buying my house now that Mongolia has become my permanent place of residence due to my recent marriage and acquisition of a new family over here. In fact, I had hoped to bring my wife and one of my stepdaughters with me to the US in order to introduce them to my friends and relatives, but unfortunately they were denied visas.

In Mongolia I have been working as a missionary, supporting myself by teaching English for a joint British-Mongolian company called Talk English (TTE). I had hoped to change jobs over the summer by going to work for a British K-12 school called The English School of Mongolia (near my home in Ulaanbaatar), but, due to a slumping

economy, their enrollment was down this year, and they had to downsize, so it's back to work at TTE for at least one more year. Teaching at TTE has provided me with a very natural and non-threatening way to get close to share my faith with my students. While many of them have shown a great deal of curiosity about my faith only a few have actually come to visit the church here. In fact, I have had more colleagues visit the church than students! There is only one Orthodox church in the entire country (Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church) located right here in the nation's capital. Unfortunately, the services are almost entirely in Russian and Slavonic and, therefore, incomprehensible to most Mongolians. It is for this reason I'm very excited that Chris and Jen Moore (and their son Andrew) will be joining me in Mongolia (hopefully as early as September) specifically in order to adapt the services and liturgies into the Mongolian language in order to attract more Mongolians to the Church. Already this is promising to be a very exciting year! Please remember to keep the Mongolian Mission in your personal and corporate prayers.

ROMANIA

The Frantz Family

One of the great joys of being a missionary in Romania is seeing personal growth in the people that are beneficiaries in our programs. Ancuta Frantz's program offers services to more than 40 families at risk of abandoning their newborn children because of poverty and lack of physical, social, and family support. Many of these very young children come to our program with serious problems. By divine providence, and the help of some Orthodox ladies from California, two of the staff from the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center received scholarships to attend special training in Bucharest on the subject of helping traumatized children. It is also very encouraging to know that our staff members will be prepared to manage our programs after our service is completed in Romania. The Protection Center also received a small grant to upgrade the facilities, so they have been busy this month with painting and fixing up the place.

The St. Dimitrie Program has not been idle either. At the time of this writing, we are finishing up with a groundbreaking "Employee Assistance Program" which was funded by a grant through the Swiss Embassy. This project introduced the concept of giving employees that have alcohol or drug-related problems at work the opportunity to go to counseling, rather than simply being discharged. This is an entirely new concept in Romania, and we were blessed to have had the funding to do the project.

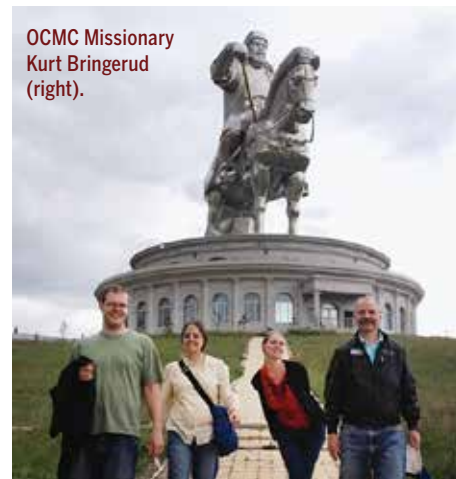
Finally, Floyd will be spending more time away from Cluj developing new projects. The most current one in is in the Moldova region of northern Romania, under His Eminence Metropolitan Teofan



Meg Engelbach



OCMC Missionary Floyd Frantz



OCMC Missionary Kurt Bringerud (right).

of Iasi. It will focus on the problems that the Orthodox clergy face with alcohol abuse in their parishes.

Felice Stewart

As a registered nurse and a licensed substance abuse counselor, I serve OCMC as a Mission Specialist in the field of substance abuse counseling and treatment. My particular focus is on helping to facilitate OCMC's emerging programs in this area around the world, most often under the auspices of the St. Dimitrie Program. Last year, I helped start a women's program in Romania and returned there this summer to evaluate its progress and consult with local staff about the future direction of the group. The St. Dimitrie Program is unique

in Romania and works under the Orthodox Church providing pastoral counseling and care to Orthodox Christians and people of all denominations. It specializes in addictions and family counseling. It was started in 2000 and the staff administers the program in a psychiatric hospital and a TB hospital as well as having an outpatient counseling program, a day center and a women's group.

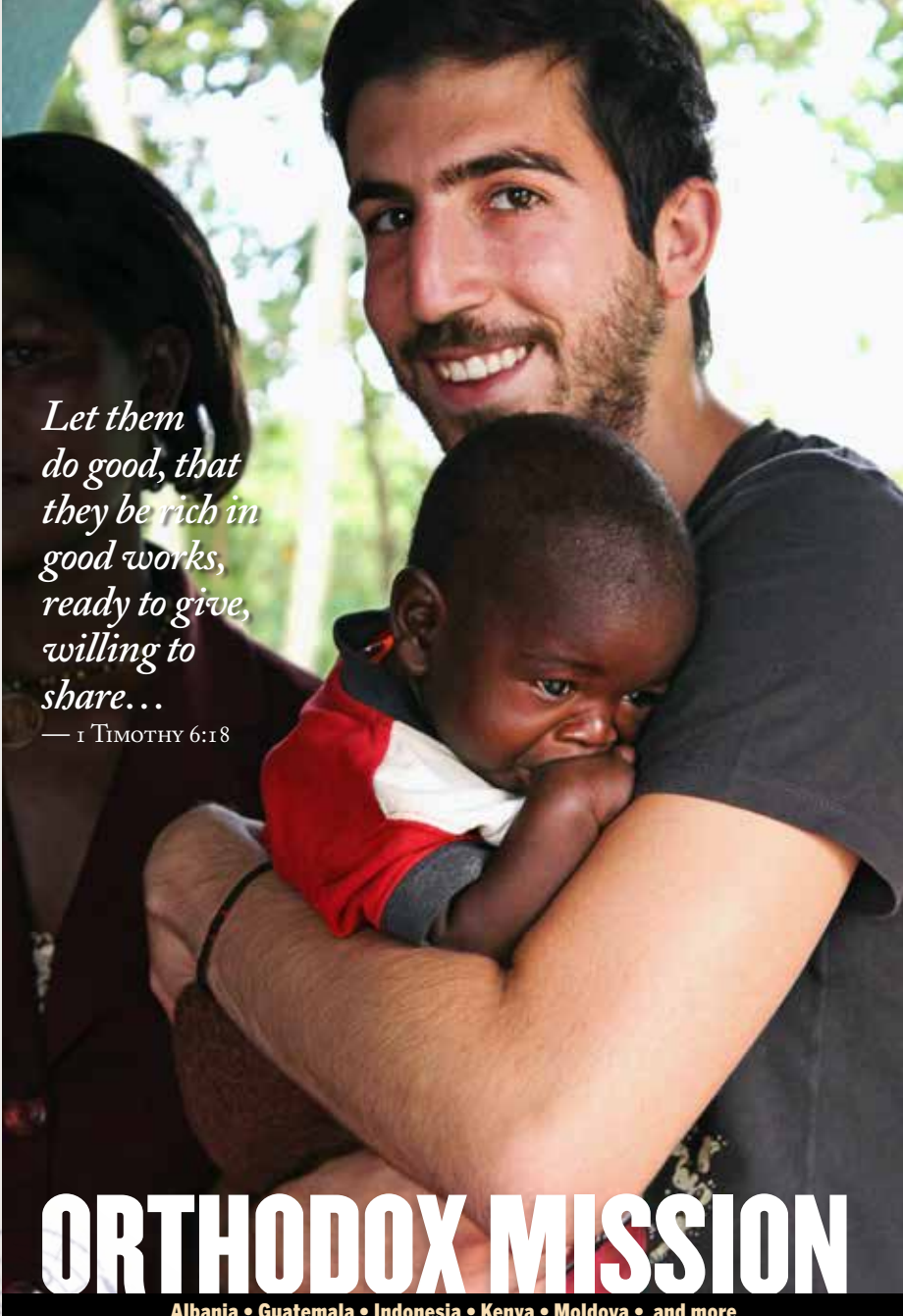
They also work in other dioceses to start similar pastoral counseling centers.

I also had the privilege of helping to introduce this program to the Archdiocese of Mwanza in Tanzania while serving there as a long-term missionary with the support of Missionary Floyd Frantz from the St. Dimitrie Program in Romania and Fr. Andrew Harrison, beginning with educating the priests on this very important subject and how to respond to it within their own parishes.

I look forward to continuing to support this much-needed work where needed in the mission field.



OCMC Mission Specialist Felice Stewart



Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share...

— 1 TIMOTHY 6:18

ORTHODOX MISSION

Albania • Guatemala • Indonesia • Kenya • Moldova • and more

TEAMS 2015

Share in a Journey of Faith...

Teach: *Share the Orthodox Faith through evangelism, religious education, seminars, bible studies or retreats.*

Albania

Earn credit hours through the Mission Institute of Orthodox Christianity on a mission practicum to Tirana. Participation limited to Orthodox seminarians.

Dates: May/June 2015

Indonesia

Teach religious education at two Orthodox church schools and offer catechism to the faithful in Medan.

Dates: June 28-July 12, 2015

Kenya

Work at the Makarios III Seminary in Nairobi and teach the Faith to catechists (local church leaders) from outlying areas of Lodwar.

Dates: April 9-April 19, 2015

Evangelism: *Preach the Gospel of Christ and give others the opportunity to hear the Good News.*

Albania

Work with youth leaders on outreach to university students and nurture college students and young adults in Tirana.

Dates: February 27- March 8, 2015

Construct: *Work with members of a local Orthodox community to provide labor and service on a project.*

Guatemala:

Work with the community in Nueva Concepcion to restore facilities to a senior center and offer outreach to surrounding communities.

Dates: July 26 - August 8, 2015

Kenya

Assist the community of St. Peter with the construction of a school in the remote village of Loupwala in northern Kenya.

Dates: May 28 - June 13, 2015

Youth: *Work with youth and young adults and serve as an example of God's love.*

Albania

Participate in the annual summer youth camp program at the Children's Home of Hope in Shen Vlash.

Dates: June 15 - July 1, 2015

Moldova

Assist with a youth camp in Orhei focused on Orthodox spirituality and culture among the youth of Moldova.

Dates: July 11 - July 23, 2015

Health Care: *Provide a holistic witness by ministering to physical needs and offering health education.*

Guatemala

Take part in a holistic health outreach to minister to spiritual and physical needs in northern Guatemala.

Dates: TBD

Look for additional Team opportunities to Alaska, Mexico, Moldova, Uganda by visiting www.ocmc.org

Orthodox Christians are called and needed to serve on Orthodox Mission Teams. Apply today.

Complete a **Mission Team application** with recommendation from an Orthodox Priest. Participants are expected to cover costs of participation and travel on the scheduled Team dates.

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

Contact OCMC regarding: additional mission team opportunities; seminarian scholarships; family and youth participation; parish mission team projects; sponsorships opportunities for projects and support for Team members.

Apply Today!

The Importance of Ministering to Women in Missions

by Alex Goodwin

It is impossible to overstate the vital role that women play in the life of the Church. After all, who, in the 2000+ year history of the Christian faith, is more deserving of reverence for serving as such a shining example of goodness and virtue than the Theotokos? Over the centuries countless women have followed in her footsteps, loving and even dying for Christ.

In places where the Orthodox Church is reemerging, or being newly established, women are coming forward to offer themselves in service of the One True Faith. Serving and strengthening these women has been a significant aspect of the OCMC's mission efforts around the world over the past 30 years and will continue to be in the future.

OCMC Staff members Pres. Renee Ritsi, Markella Balasis, and Margo Toscas Kelley have participated in OCMC ministries directly aimed at empowering women. Their reflections on the impact and importance of this work serves as testament to American Orthodoxy's commitment to raise up more women who will continue the work of making disciples of all nations.

Albania: Pres. Renee Ritsi

Over the last twenty years, the reports we hear on the growth of the Orthodox Church

BELOW : In Romania, women have been gathering to dedicate themselves not only to take, but to also keep a "woman's place" in His home, the Church. These same women are serving in many different capacities within the Church providing vital outreach to their fellow Romanians.



in Albania come to us on a large scale—hundreds of churches have been rebuilt and opened, hundreds of men and women have graduated from seminary, 150 clergy are serving under the loving presence of a full synod and thousands and thousands and thousands, in a predominately Muslim country, have been baptized. These are all tremendous miracles.

In the ten years I served as a long-term missionary through the OCMC, a good portion of my ministry was unsurprisingly connected to women. From our early years in Kenya, I have a vivid memory of our two children playing and then napping on reed mats with five or six Kenyan children, while moms would attend catechism or scripture lessons. In Albania the story was not much different. Our living room was a



ABOVE : OCMC Missionary Gabriela Hoppe has taken her Orthodox faith and offered it in service alongside her husband Nathan. Together, they coordinate many initiatives of the Orthodox Church in Albania, including many aimed at ministering to the youth.

tiny place, but it sufficed in those early years as a place for women

BELOW : The participants in the 3rd annual women's retreat for the Metropolis of Bessarabia, with two of the local clergy. These retreats, which welcome OCMC mission team members from the United States, are opportunities for Orthodox women in Moldova to grow in fellowship and discuss their vital role in the life of the Church.



to gather, while the kids would quietly play or read. Again I was drawn to spiritually feed women. I believe that when we teach our faith to women, we invest in the future of the Church. Women who hunger for a deeper spiritual life, and are fed, will become a part of the story of a healthy Church for generations to come. They shoulder the responsibility of passing our faith to the next generation, of being the moral guide for others and a sounding board for their friends, husband, parents, siblings, and co-workers. They will have the traditions of our faith as their rudder and Scripture and the writings of the Church as their consolation.

In 2013, the OCMC received invitations for two short-term teams to minister to clergy wives – one to Moldova and the other to Albania. In the words of His Beatitude Anastasios, who invited the fall team to Albania, the needs are many-faceted. An immense part of the challenge is that many clergy wives lack role models of what healthy clergy couples look and act like. Many of them grew up under Communism, without a good understanding of our faith, while others grew up in the years immediately following its fall, when materialism tried to fill the void that an anti-Christian world produces. Others, of course, are pious, godly women who stand firm against the current and live their life eager to learn, eager to serve as witnesses of Christ in this world.

Women, in my opinion, are an essential part of how the Gospel will be transferred from one generation to another. As we invest energy to teach and serve women, the future generations of the faithful will grow and mature into living saints who will teach others the faith and live with the unquenchable desire to serve Christ and His Church. Ministry to women then

becomes an important response to how we will grow as a Church, here at home and all around the world. The Church in Albania is growing.

Moldova: Markella Balasis

In early May 2014, our two-person team traveled to Moldova for a two-day retreat for clergy wives and lay women of the Metropolis of Bessarabia. This was the third consecutive year that a retreat for women has been offered in the Metropolis. The idea of an annual retreat arose from the desire to have greater communication, cooperation, and communion among the clergy wives of the Metropolis. In this way, they would create a network through which they can support one another and share ideas and experiences.

For this year's retreat, the discussions focused on the unique role of the priest's wife (preoteasa) to promote outreach and philanthropy in her local community. As human beings, but especially as women, it is in our nature to serve others, to be nurturing. For women in the Church, this role translates into serving one another in imitation of Christ, who came "not to be served but to serve" (Mark 10:45). An Orthodox woman in Moldova has a wonderful opportunity to be an example of such service to not only their children and family, but their whole parish. Our conversations focused on their potential to guide and inspire others and encouraged them to take up that mantle.

Preoteasa Mariana spent many months organizing the women's retreat. Though she is above all a wife to her husband and a mother to their daughter, she serves in so many different other ways, some of which probably go unnoticed. She bustles around the inside of their parish church doing whatever is needed—lighting candles, setting up tables, or helping to read and sing during the divine services. Besides all of that, Mariana works as Coordinator for Filantropia Crestina, a local outreach and philanthropic ministry of the Church. Many of the retreat participants, I think, recognized Mariana's many gifts and were inspired by her example.

Another clergy wife, Preoteasa Anastasia, has attended the retreat each of the three years it has been held. In order to attend these retreats, she has not only traveled a significant distance, but she has left behind her husband and their four young daughters to care for themselves while she was away. But she has done that gladly, knowing that she would gain



LEFT : Rajmonda Shqevi was one of the first women that former OCMC Missionary Pres. Renee Ritsi worked with to help reestablish the Orthodox Faith in a country that had seen its Christian heritage nearly erased by Communism. Women like Rajmonda have played an integral role in the Church's triumphant resurrection.



ABOVE : Preoteasa Mariana (far right) and Preoteasa Anastasia (middle) having a lively discussion with another attendee of the retreat in Moldova.



ABOVE : Women hunger for a deeper spiritual life. In Albania, many of these women have sought theological training and have gone on to take up leadership roles in the Church. Here, Ana Baba from Tirana, Albania, serves on an OCMC mission team to Kenya in pursuit of her calling to serve as a missionary.

so much from the retreat experience, and it's what keeps her coming back year after year. After the first retreat in 2012, she was motivated to organize a "Seminar for Life" to discuss abortion issues, which was attended by over fifty people.

Romania: Margo Toscas Kelley

In September 2009 I was blessed to serve as part of an OCMC Mission Team that sought to reach out to women in Romania. Among the gathered clergy wives and national ministry leaders, we had prepared to handle one suggested topic delicately: Empowering Women. Though I remained personally invested in the initiative, I really had no interest in empowering anyone in particular over another. But realizing that there is plenty of space for anyone to begin feeling somehow "shut out" by the context of mere physical space and duty appointed in the Church, I had already learned that typically women sense a more severe stopping point than men. This, and more, was found to be common among those we met on retreat.

All women shared concern for deep-rooted issues facing families and challenges in their post-Communist/post-modern era inundated with the effects of secularism. Some (mostly clergy wives) expressed feeling trapped by stereotypes and expectations felt within their local churches. Though we could affirm some common struggle, we simply provided the pattern for offering retreats as vehicles to explore, discuss, affirm, strengthen, and, even better, coordinate the valuable, natural gifts and talents of women who serve the Church.

We had hoped to keep focus on The One Who Empowers, our All-Mighty God, and His plan for His people. This gave way to the voices of those appointed to help and nurture the women gathered: their bishop, spiritual fathers and mothers, confessors, advisors, and OCMC Missionaries who were present with us. Their presence and dialogue remained key to the purposes of our gathering in a retreat setting.

By God, for God, and with God, these women dedicated themselves not only to take, but to also keep a "woman's place" in His home, the Church. In this hopeful expression to seek and guide others to also offer a naturally inclined service to and through their local churches, we heard witness of outreaching ministries, vibrant mission churches, and monastic communities filled with women who already employ their specialized licenses and degrees (many in theology) through a living experience and witness. They serve throughout Romania and into neighboring countries with the presence of many saints before them and, especially, the Most Holy and Ever Virgin Mary, the God-Bearer, furthering the innate gifts and talents of women rooted deeply in Christ's empowering love.



In Guatemala, thousands of Mayans have recently come to the Orthodox faith. Your financial support provides the foundation and guidance they need to grow in their faith.

Leaving a Legacy:

How the Faithful of North America are *Ensuring the Future of Orthodox Missions*

by Penny Petropoul

Each of us has the ability to ensure that our Lord's work of spreading His Holy Gospel to all nations continues for generations. Over its 30-year history, the OCMC has been blessed with a group of visionary donors from all walks of life. These donors do not know each other, yet they share a deep connection – the connection of supporting the OCMC in their will or trust, ensuring that their stewardship continues for years to come. Their bequests have made and will make a substantial difference in the OCMC's ability to reach further than ever in sharing the Orthodox faith with people around the world.

These individuals have been moved by the desire to change and save lives, and they know that there is no better way to do so than by sharing the life-saving mes-

sage and love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Bequests have and are being made from generous donors who have been life-long supporters of the OCMC, as well as by

those who have just recently become supporters, and in one case by a man who had never before made a gift to the OCMC. We are indebted and honored to have these individuals as a part of the OCMC family. We are all called to serve in many different ways, and it is our hope and sincere prayer that many more will take to heart and hear Christ's call to "make disciples of all nations."

A bequest – or inclusion of the OCMC in one's will – is one of many ways to answer Christ's call that can make an enormous difference.

Just this month, the OCMC received a generous bequest from Barbara Mary Pecuch, 65, who fell asleep in the Lord on August 9, 2013. Barbara was a lifelong parishioner of St. Michael's Orthodox Church in Old Forge, PA, a long-time member of her parish's choir, and a dedicated church school teacher. Barbara's love for her Church and great faith and trust in God were embodied in her legacy gift, which will be used for



ABOVE : In Kenya, your stewardship is carried out through projects like building churches, schools, and wells in remote villages; hopefully that kindness also inspires others to take the step of ensuring their own good stewardship.

LEFT : The OCMC is able to reach the youth in Alaska through short-term mission teams, touching lives with the peace and joy that only Christ can bring.

RIGHT: Albania is a place where OCMC is very active in mission work, with long-term missionaries and short-term mission teams serving to strengthen the Faith of those longing for it there. Your gifts to the OCMC help to keep this work going.

missions work from Africa to Asia to Central America. In Guatemala, for example, thousands of native Mayan Indians have recently come to the Orthodox faith and are yearning to learn more and deepen their newfound faith. Barbara's gift will help to ensure that these newly-illuminated Orthodox Christians receive the support and guidance they need to grow in their faith. The OCMC is deeply grateful for Barbara's generosity, commitment, and love. Her gift reflects a life that exemplified the teaching to "love one another as I have loved you."

People of all ages are remembering organizations like OCMC in their estate plans. For example, the OCMC's newest bequest intention is from a married couple in their 40s. They are raising their young children and looking forward to many more years together. What inspired them to take time out of their busy lives now to create an estate plan and include the OCMC? It's simple. As this couple noted:

"We learned that passing away without a will or trust can mean that our wishes may not be met, and that our heirs might have to pay hefty estate taxes and wait unnecessarily long to benefit from our assets. We also learned that, for a modest sum, we could have an attorney create a trust for us that would ensure that our estate was immediately available to our heirs and that our wishes would be honored. Since giving to our Church and the OCMC is important to us now, we thought, why wouldn't we do so in our estate plan? Although it was easy to consider putting it off, we decided that it was too important to do so. Creating an estate plan

ended up not taking much time at all, and we are so glad that we did it. What a wonderful feeling and peace of mind – to know that we have provided for our loved ones, and for our deepest values and beliefs. Our Orthodox faith is at the center of our lives and has provided so much joy and peace to us. Knowing that we are able to help people we have never met to experience that same joy and gift of faith is the greatest gift of all."

Are you considering a bequest? We hope that if you feel so inspired, you will let us know. Being able to share your story – anonymously or with your name – can help to inspire others to take the important step of creating their own estate plan and ensuring that their good stewardship now is carried forward to the people and organizations

whose work they want to endure.

If you have not yet considered including the OCMC in your estate plan, we hope that you will be inspired to add the OCMC the next time you update it. We would be happy to provide sample bequest language for you. Including the OCMC in your will or trust can help to ensure that, for generations to come, Orthodox Christian missionaries will continue to toil in the global vineyard working by God's grace to "make disciples of all nations," touching lives with the peace and joy that only Christ can bring.

In addition to bequests and outright cash gifts, there are many ways to give to the OCMC, including gifts of stock, real estate, annuities, charitable remainder trusts, or designating the OCMC as a beneficiary of a



retirement plan. In many cases, such gifts can have significant tax advantages for you, while also making a difference for Orthodox missions. For information specific to your state or situation, please contact your attorney or other professional advisor.

If you would like more information about these or other giving opportunities, please contact Penny Petropoul in the OCMC Development Department, at 877-GO-FORTH, ext. 160, or penny@ocmc.org.

Gift of Appreciated Securities

Do you want to make a gift to the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), have an asset that has appreciated in value, and want to minimize your capital gains tax burden?

Instead of selling the asset and making a gift of cash, consider making a gift of the appreciated asset to OCMC. When combined

with a charitable income tax deduction, the after-tax cost of the gift to you may be lower than the face value of the gift – yet the benefit to OCMC, and worldwide missions, remains significant!

If you would like to make a transfer of stocks, bonds, or mutual funds, please notify the OCMC

Development Department, at **877-GO-FORTH**, ext. 160, or penny@ocmc.org. Then, please instruct your broker to contact UBS Financial Services at **248-643-9200** or **800-446-0311** (ask for Steven K. Kocher, CFP). Your philanthropy can help to change lives, and we are grateful.

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE A MISSION PRIEST?



Every day, everywhere you go, people are waiting to become Orthodox.” This is how one Orthodox mission priest, Fr. Emmanuel, describes the experience of serving in northern Uganda. Despite the many years of civil wars, Orthodoxy has flourished in this remote area. **Ugandan Orthodox priests travel all over to many villages and towns. With nearly every visit, more people are baptized.**

None of these efforts can happen without mission priests. These priests are crucial to reach the millions of people who do not yet know Christ - those who are “waiting to become Orthodox.” **You can share in the ministry of mission priests through a gift to OCMC’s Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) program!**