



ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSION CENTER

**The Leading
Edge in Missions:**

*The First
Orthodox
Church
in Pakistan*

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

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

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

Mailing Address

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

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

Program Contacts:

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

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On the cover: The struggles the Christians face in Pakistan are significant. Their faith, having come to the region with Christ's Apostles Thomas and Bartholomew, is a source of hope. Many of the Christians in Pakistan just want to live peacefully alongside their Muslim brothers and sisters growing in the faith that they cling to so dearly.



OCMC Executive Director (left) with His Eminence Metropolitan Konstantinos of Singapore and South Asia at the opening of Annunciation Parish in Wazirabad, Pakistan. Annunciation parish, the first Orthodox church in Pakistan, was sponsored by OCMC.

STANDING TOGETHER:

The First Orthodox Church Opened In Pakistan.

Conflict, suicide bombings, the Taliban, anti-American sentiment – these are common media topics regarding Pakistan. Less known, though, are the struggles of nearly 3 million Christians and an historic opening of the first Orthodox church on February 6th, 2014. In light of what is publicized, many are amazed to find out there is a substantial Christian presence in Pakistan and that Orthodoxy is growing.

In many regions of Asia, Christianity has its roots in apostolic times. According to Eusebius' record, the apostles Thomas and Bartholomew traveled to Parthia (modern Iran) and India. By AD 226, there were bishops in northwest India and Baluchistan, which included parts of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.¹ The modern Christian presence in Pakistan, though, is attributed to later missionary work in the late 1800's and early 1900's. From that time, Christianity had a significant impact. Some of today's prominent Pakistani leaders were educated in Christian schools. Unfortunately, these

schools were later nationalized in 1972 and lost their Christian character. These more recent missionary efforts also spawned the majority of Christians in Pakistan today. Most of Pakistan's 2+ million Christians are descendants of converts from this period of time. Such is the case of Fr. John Tanveer, the first Orthodox priest in modern-day Pakistan.

Fr. John was born into a Catholic family. His father converted to Catholicism from the Presbyterian Church, established in this later missionary period. Like many others, Fr. John was educated in the Christian schools of Pakistan. After a long spiritual

Some of today's prominent Pakistani leaders were educated in Christian schools. Unfortunately, these schools were later nationalized in 1972 and lost their Christian character.

journey and career, he was still searching. The road that finally led to his conversion and present ministry involved the meeting of two significant people. One was General Aronis Spyridon. Fr. John met General Spyridon when he visited Pakistan in 1990. From that time, Fr. John began studying Orthodoxy. A letter of inquiry to General Spyridon made its way to His Eminence Metropolitan Nikitas (then of Hong Kong

Standing Together *in Pakistan*

and Southeast Asia) in 1998. In 2001, Metropolitan Nikitas sent a representative to meet Fr. John. He followed up with a personal visit in 2003. It was because of this visit by Metropolitan Nikitas, recalls Fr. John, that he and his wife Rosie committed themselves to establishing the Orthodox Church in Pakistan. Next, in 2005, Metropolitan Nikitas returned again. This time he came with then—Fr. Konstantinos (now His Eminence Metropolitan Konstantinos of Singapore, Pakistan, and South Asia) and chrismated 400 people. This could be considered the actual birth of modern-day Orthodoxy in Pakistan. In 2008, after further studies, Fr. John was ordained by His Eminence Metropolitan Nektarios of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia. With that, the immense task of establishing the Church and ministering to the many that had been chrismated began.

What is it like to be Christian in Pakistan? Little is heard of the Christian plight. Choosing to be or remain Christian in Pakistan involves sacrifice. At the societal level, numerous reports describe the current struggles. Christians do not have equal political or economic status or the opportunity to play a role in government. In the constitution, no Christian can become President, Prime Minister, Chairman of the Senate, or Speaker of the Parliament. These policies are also informally applied at lower levels in government and in the workplace.² With the nationalization of Christian schools in 1972, there has been an increase of illiteracy and poverty among Christians.

Added to these burdens is the frightening use of the blasphemy laws. These laws state that a person who disgraces or insults the

Choosing to be or remain Christian in Pakistan involves sacrifice.

Quran is to be punished by life imprisonment. A person who writes, speaks, or illustrates in a disgracing manner is to face capital punishment. A posting on the “Christians in Pakistan” Web site reports that, “At least 16 people are presently on death sentence for blasphemy, while another 20 are serving life imprisonment.”³ Though these numbers are few, and none have yet to be put to death under these laws, the results affect all Christians, like a dark cloud hanging over their heads. Various articles, such as that published recently in the New York Times, mention instances of gangs breaking into homes and kidnapping Christians, or charges of blasphemy being used as a means to oppress or resolve quarrels.⁴

These actions are not infrequent. Only some of them make it to public media, such as the 2012 case of an eleven-year-old girl who was arrested for blasphemy and the widespread reactions that followed. Or last year’s burning of 178 houses, shops, and churches in Lahore belonging to Christians, after a blasphemy accusation was made against a 28-year-old Christian. Or most recently, the bombing of an historic Christian church in Peshwar, where 78 people were killed and 130 wounded.⁵

In this environment the Pakistani Christians struggle to survive. Fr. John states emphatically that Orthodoxy promotes peace and love. This is what is needed in



ABOVE: His Eminence Konstantinos Metropolitan of Singapore, Pakistan, and South Asia addresses more than 200 people that attended the opening of Annunciation parish in Pakistan. Attendees included Muslim neighbors responding to the simple outreach of love, who even came forward to receive blessings from the Metropolitan.

Pakistan. This spirit of love, he says, must be the spirit of the Christian population. At the same time, OCMC is striving to work with Metropolitan Konstantinos and Fr. John to offer some form of encouragement. OCMC’s first visit to Pakistan, in 2009, came shortly after Fr. John’s ordination. Since that time a relationship has developed. The most recent outcome is sponsoring the construction of the first Orthodox church in Pakistan. On February 6th, 2014, in the city of Wazirabad, the opening ceremonies of the Annunciation parish were conducted by Metropolitan Konstantinos of Singapore. Over 200 people attended, including Muslim neighbors responding to the simple outreach of love who even came forward to receive blessings from the Metropolitan. The work that has taken place in Wazirabad has grown in the past 5 years. The community has gone from 15 Orthodox in 2009 to over 150 people today. Though only a small contribution in light of the harsh and difficult lives faced by this poor community, the offering of a church provided great encouragement. “Just to know that others are thinking and praying

LEFT: Pakistan is home to an estimated 2+ million Christian minority. Fr. John Tanveer (right), seen here ministering to some of these faithful, is an Orthodox priest in Pakistan who is trying to grow the Church there.





ABOVE: Fr. John Tanveer (center) was born to a Catholic family in Pakistan and went to one of the country's Christian schools. Following his conversion to Orthodox, he was ordained an Orthodox priest by His Eminence Metropolitan Nektarios of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia to minister to the growing community of believers. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Though not given great coverage in the media, Orthodox Christianity is growing in Pakistan, as evidenced by the opening of the Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Wazirabad in February of 2014.

for us, gives us strength beyond measure," says Fr. John.

Following the opening of the church and the visit that surrounded this event, numerous opportunities to assist the Orthodox communities of Pakistan were identified – from ways to provide income,



to education, to helping introduce projects that will reduce the vulnerability of young women, to the construction of a church in the major city of Lahore, or assisting with the support of catechists and those who conduct services in villages where Fr. John cannot be present. In the coming years, the hope and prayer are that this initial work will be just the beginning of a developing relationship, that it will lead to the further establishment of the Orthodox Church in Pakistan, and that it will stand as an encouragement to those who strive to embrace the Christian life of peace and love in this environment.

At the conclusion of the first OCMC visit to Pakistan, an evening gathering was held in a small and simple home. The room was packed and dimly lit. A meal was offered. Afterwards, the conversation became open and heartfelt. One man asked a simple, but difficult question. It came not long after there was an attack against Christians in another village. He said, "Among the Muslims around the world, when something offensive happens, there is

a strong reaction. But here in Pakistan, you have heard the kinds of struggles we often face. Why doesn't anyone from the Christian world say anything?" He clarified that he didn't mean why there aren't aggressive responses; but rather, why isn't there even a single word of encouragement to them, or so little mention of what is happening in the media? The OCMC visitor sat quietly and felt the pain and anguish of those present, slightly embarrassed that, until recently, he hadn't known what was being faced and was unable to justify or explain. He answered, "I don't know. I'm sorry. Many haven't heard. I will tell your story."

1. CHRISTIANS IN PAKISTAN. CHRISTIANITY IN PAKISTAN. RETRIEVED MARCH 13, 2014, FROM [HTTP://WWW.CHRISTIANSINPAKISTAN.COM](http://www.christiansinpakistan.com).
2. *IBID.*

3. CHRISTIANS IN PAKISTAN (2014, FEB. 9). PAKISTANI BLASPHEMY LAWS ESCORT TO DISCRIMINATION OF MINORITY GROUPS. RETRIEVED MARCH 13, 2014, FROM [HTTP://WWW.CHRISTIANSINPAKISTAN.COM](http://www.christiansinpakistan.com).

4. AKBAR AHMED (2013, DEC. 23). PAKISTAN'S PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS. RETRIEVED ON MARCH 3, 2014, FROM [HTTP://WWW.NYTIMES.COM](http://www.nytimes.com).

5. AFP/WEB DESK (2013, MAR. 9). LAHORE: CHRISTIAN HOMES, BURNT, PLUNDERED OVER BLASPHEMY ROW.

AGES

Liturgical Workbench

A Tool for Enriching the Liturgical Life of Parishes on the Mission Field

by Dr. Michael Colburn

The Church Fathers and hymnographers have given us a rich banquet to satisfy our hunger and thirst to know God—the *liturgical calendar with its variety of readings and hymns*. It teaches us, encourages us, and reminds us of events in the life of our Lord, the Theotokos, and the saints.

It helps us to experience and know our God.

An important aspect of missionary work is to enable people around the world to experience this banquet in their own local languages.

In English-speaking countries, our parishes are blessed with an abundance of the varied foods that make up this liturgical banquet. We have an abundance of translations of the liturgical texts and hymns in English and people who know how to consult the Typikon and find the hymns for the day. And, even if there are parishes that do not have chanters who know how to determine the hymns for the day, there are resources on the Internet to help them, such as weekly Greek services from Fr. Leo Scheffe (analogion.gr/glt/etoima.htm) and Greek/English services from Fr. Seraphim Dedes (www.ematins.org).

As we feast on the spiritual banquet provided through the liturgical calendar, we must not forget our brothers and sisters in other places such as Africa and Guatemala, who also hunger and thirst for God. What we do for them, or fail to do, we do to the Lord.

In Africa, there are over 2,000 distinct languages. In Guatemala, there are over 20 languages. In these two places, there are people who have recently become Orthodox. There are many parishes that have few, or none, of the liturgical texts and hymns in the language of their parishioners. Many of these parishes do not have chanters who know how to determine the hymns for the day. And many of these parishes could not afford to purchase the required set of liturgical books even if they were available. The liturgical



banquet that can address their spiritual hunger and thirst is not available to them in its richness.

In 2012, as an OCMC Mission Specialist in linguistics and translation, and having worked for 24 years as a software developer, I and others met with Fr. Seraphim Dedes to discuss how the liturgical needs of parishes around the world could be met by developing liturgical software.

What if it were possible to create a software program that could generate a daily service? What if, with one click of the computer mouse, you could generate all the liturgical services for an entire year (Compline, Vespers, Matins, the Divine Liturgy, Holy Week) with all the parts and hymns automatically inserted per the Typikon? What if you could pick which translations you wanted to use? What if you could do this for any language, as spoken in any country, and for any jurisdiction? And what if the generated services included links to musical scores in Byzantine or Western notation, and audio recordings of the hymns to listen to and practice before the service? And what if you could not only print these services, but you could view them in your browser, or on your tablet, or on your smartphone? What if you could have the entire set of services, musical scores, and recordings available to use in places where there is no Internet connectivity?

This tool is not wishful thinking! Two years after that meeting in 2012, it is a reality, and is called AGES Liturgical Workbench (ALWB). AGES is an acronym for Auto Generated Ecclesiastical Services.

What do the services generated by AGES Liturgical Workbench look like?

ALWB is able to generate services in a single language, or bilingual versions that combine any of the languages available in the ALWB library. For example, among the Orthodox living in the Nairobi area of Kenya, the languages commonly used during a service are English, Gikuyu, Greek, and Swahili. **Figure 1** (see graphic) shows the Divine Liturgy generated in English and Swahili.

ALWB generates a menu that shows what services are available and what file formats are available, as shown in **Figure 2**. Formats currently available are HTML, PDF of the text of the service, and a PDF that combines into a single file all the musical scores for the service. The HTML version allows one to view both the text and the scores together, as shown in **Figure 3**.



Hymns are generated with hyperlinks to Byzantine and Western musical scores and to audio recordings. When the user clicks the link, the score opens to the right. In addition to generating PDFs to place on a Web site, ALWB can also generate PDFs to be sent to a company to print service books, e.g. for the sacrament of Baptism.

What is the technology behind AGES Liturgical Workbench?

ALWB was written in the Java programming language so that it can run on any operating system. It can work offline from the Internet, an important consideration of people in countries such as many in Africa where connectivity is not always or reliably available. It has been developed as open source software, which means the Orthodox community worldwide has free access to it. The source code will be soon available on the Internet. Most people will not directly use ALWB. Instead, they will access the services and books generated by it. ALWB will be used by specialists who are generating services to be placed on Web sites or to create a PDF file to be sent to a company to print as a service book.

What functionality does AGES Liturgical Workbench provide?

ALWB provides four functions as shown in **Figure 4**. The four functions are: storage, organization, generation, and delivery of services and books in the original Greek and in translations of the liturgical texts.

1. Storage. The original Greek text (provided graciously by Fr. Leo Scheffe) is stored in

ALWB with a unique lookup key assigned to each paragraph in each liturgical text. Translations are stored using the same keys, but with additional information: the name of the language, as spoken in which country, and for what version. For example, a translation can be in Swahili as spoken in Kenya (which is slightly different than in Tanzania or elsewhere), and for the Orthodox Archdiocese of Kenya.

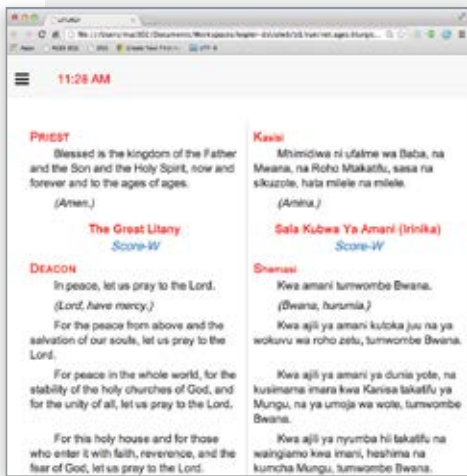
2. Organization. Services and books are organized using templates. The templates follow the rubrics of the Typikon and indicate the order of services and what the content should be, independent of any particular translation. The templates can be tailored to meet the needs of a specific Archdiocese, Diocese, or Metropolis, or to use a different Typikon.

3. Generation. With the click of a mouse, the user triggers the generation of a book or service. The generator determines the information required to select the correct hymns and readings based on the day and mode of the week, where the date of the service falls within the liturgical calendar (what day of Lent it is, for example), etc. It uses that information, and from the template retrieves the hymns of the day for the desired languages, e.g. English and Swahili.

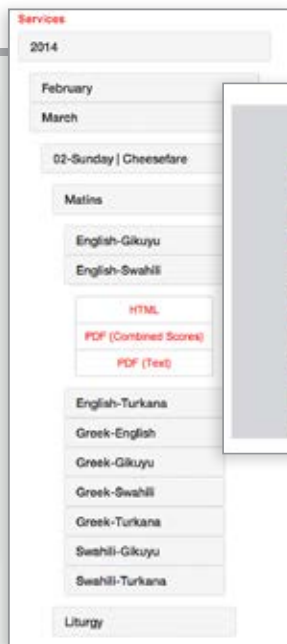
4. Delivery. ALWB generates an entire Web site—HTML files, PDF files, and automatically creates an index web page for people to see what services are available, in which languages, and in what formats. It also automatically creates links to musical scores and audio recordings. The folders for the Web site can then be placed on a server for priests, chanters, and parishioners to access. The HTML and PDFs can be viewed on desktops, tablets, or smartphones. The PDF files can be printed.

Plans for Use of AGES Liturgical Workbench in Kenya

Last December, I went to the Makarios III Patriarchal Seminary in Nairobi, Kenya, to meet with His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Kenya, Fr. Raphael Kamau (manager of the Archdiocese translations and publications department) and faculty members. The purpose of the trip was to demonstrate AGES Liturgical Workbench to them. After seeing it, the Archbishop requested that ALWB be used to publish their next edition of the Priest's Service Book. There are also plans to use it to generate services for specific days in languages throughout Africa.



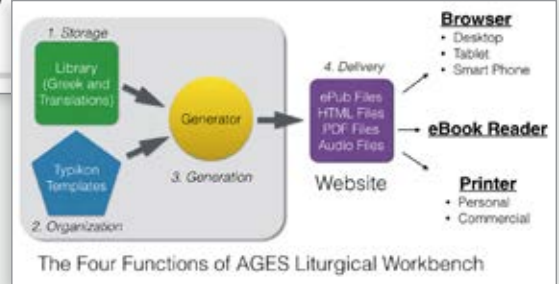
ABOVE: Figure 1, English-Swahili Divine Liturgy text generated by AGES Liturgical Workbench (ALWB).



LEFT: Figure 2, Menu generated by ALWB.



LEFT: Figure 3, ALWB provides links to view musical scores.



BELOW: Figure 4, The main functions provided by ALWB.

During my visit, Fr. Raphael and I loaded Swahili and Gikuyu translations of the Divine Liturgy into the ALWB library. While doing so, we identified a number of advantages to using ALWB.

RIGHT: AGES Liturgical Workbench (ALWB) is currently being tested. Dr. Colburn hopes to officially release the first version of AGES Liturgical Workbench this June. This software can be used by priests around the world to celebrate the Liturgy in the language of the people receiving it.

BELOW: An important aspect of missionary work is to enable people around the world to experience worship in their own local languages. Software called AGES Liturgical Workbench (ALWB) is being developed by OCMC Missionary specialist Dr. Michael Colburn and Fr. Seraphim Dedes to make this important missiological principle a reality.

The translations and publications office in Kenya handles layout and printing of liturgical books not just for Kenya, but throughout Africa. One advantage to using ALWB is that they only have to do layout



once, since the templates separate content (i.e. translations) from layout. Second, it will make it easier for African priests who travel from one language area to another. The layout will be standardized across languages. Since the parts of each service will be on the same page for each language's edition of the service book, it will be easy for African priests to find what they need. Third, when a template is used to generate bilingual services, if there are parts missing in one of the languages it is very obvious. So using ALWB will improve the quality of the publications.

ALWB is currently being used to generate eMatins and a Digital Chant Stand for testing in the USA. We plan to officially release the first version of AGES Liturgical Workbench this June. God-willing, my wife Lisa and I plan to go to Kenya this summer to teach people how to use ALWB and to help them start using it to prepare the Priest's Service Book. In the meantime, we are thankful that Meg Engelbach has recently arrived in Nairobi as a long-term OCMC Missionary to specialize in translation. Although her primary focus at this point is language learning, she has been helping out by loading translations in the Turkana language. She will also help load the Priest's Service Book translations before we arrive this summer.

Please pray for Fr. Seraphim Dedes and me as we complete work on the first release of AGES Liturgical Workbench! And pray for our brothers and sisters overseas that ALWB will enrich their liturgical lives by providing services with the hymns for each day in the many languages in Africa, Guatemala, and elsewhere!



Thousands Mourn the Passing of **FR. ANDRES GIRON**

by Fr. John Chakos

It was with great sadness that family, friends, and the faithful gathered to pay tribute to Fr. Andres Giron — church leader, reformer, and passionate servant of the poor. Over the last two months, he fought a valiant battle against his diabetes, hoping to overcome its ravages, including the amputation of his right leg. On his 67th birthday, Valentine's Day, seven priests gathered in the intensive care room to offer the sacrament of Holy Unction for healing of both body and soul. Their fervent intercessions and that of people throughout Guatemala and the world were keenly felt, but the announcement of his passing two days later would bring his martyrdom to an end. He now belonged to the ages and the judgment of God.

What transpired after that was truly remarkable. People by the thousands from all walks of life came to pay their respects, each with a treasured memory or sense of gratitude for selfless service rendered on behalf of his beloved Guatemala and

the holy Church of Christ. One comes to know the tenderness of his heart and the impetus behind his passionate cry for social justice when listening to the stories that shaped his conscience. He tells of traveling to a parish one day by horse



ABOVE LEFT: Fr. Andres Giron (right) spiritually guided thousands of Mayan people who hungered and thirsted for the One True Faith to the Orthodox Church. His Eminence Metropolitan Athenagoras (left) received them under His Omophorion into the Holy Orthodox Metropolis of Mexico.

LEFT: Fr. Andres Giron passed away earlier this year two days after his 67th birthday. Shaped by champions for social justice like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he will be remembered as a man who advocated for, served, and spiritually guided thousands of Mayans in Guatemala, ultimately leading them to Orthodox Christianity.



over the mountains of Santa Ana Mixtan, suffering from hunger. He came upon a small hut with a thatched roof and he said to a Mayan woman: "Maria, can you give me a tortilla with salt?" And she answered, "I have five children, and I don't have money to buy my corn." He recalls the piercing effect of her words: "This answer made me cry, and I left even hungrier, but with a full conscience." Later that day, he would return with the church collection and give it to her.

Further evidence of the forces that shaped his mission in life can be found in the writings of Mahatma Gandhi, whose large photo taken from Life Magazine hangs on his office wall. Also, while studying in Memphis, Fr. Andres met with Martin Luther King, Jr., shortly before his assassination, whose counsel convinced the young Andres to pursue justice by non-violent means. Then there was the witness of the heroic priests who gave their lives for the cause of social justice in Central America. Fr. Andres admired them greatly, naming some of the many villages that he built after these heroes.

More than anything else, however, the force that moved him to endure many sufferings, exile, threats, rejections, false accusations, and three attempts on his life, was his passionate love for Jesus Christ. When preaching Christ or receiving the Eucharist, tears would well up in his eyes. Evidence of the seriousness with which he pursued the call of Christ to minister to the "least of the brethren" can be found in the lives of the thousands whom he touched. For some it was a scholarship to receive an education, for many communities and individuals it was help to buy some land to cultivate their crops. Almost every day, Fr. Andres would receive visitors seeking counsel for their problems, prayers for healing, legal help to register their property or to recover what was taken from them fraudulently, medicine for the sick, or help in finding doctors. He gave many unwanted children and orphans a place to call home under his roof. While attending to his pastoral duties as a priest, he maintained a seminary for as many as 75 students at a time, many of whom later would serve the Church or distinguish themselves in their chosen careers. Then there were the arduous trips over dangerous roads to remote villages where spiritually-





ABOVE: Fr. Andres fought tirelessly for the Mayan people for whom he cared so deeply. What gave him strength through many sufferings, exile, threats, rejections, false accusations, and three attempts on his life, was his passionate love for Jesus Christ.

abandoned communities bereft of pastoral care would now have a father. He also served as a senator in the congress, led 70,000 on a historic march for peace in 1986, represented his country on a UN commission for human rights, and headed up the campesino movement for agrarian reform.

Whether as an educator, preacher, political activist, friend, healer of broken bodies and souls, and visionary, Fr. Andres Giron grounded himself in the rich soil of an unconquerable faith in Christ. Such was the life of the man who led his people to Orthodox Christianity. He was their father and mentor in every conceivable way. May his memory be eternal and his legacy a lasting one.

RIGHT: Fr. Andres Giron will be remembered as a man who loved his people and loved the Lord. When preaching Christ or receiving the Eucharist, tears would well up in his eyes.

BELOW: Fr. Andres Giron (center right), pictured here with OCMC Missionary Fr. John Chakos (center left) and an OCMC Mission Team in 2013, was joined by faithful from the United States in the final years of his life to continue the work of teaching and guiding the Mayan people in the Orthodox Christian way of life.





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

— 1 TIMOTHY 6:18

ORTHODOX MISSION TEAMS 2014

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

Share in a Journey of Faith...

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

Teaching

Offer a living witness of Orthodoxy through evangelism, religious education, seminars, bible studies, and retreats. Share the Orthodox Faith with youth, adults, catechumens, clergy, ministry leaders, and the faithful. Clergy, students, teachers, seminarians, youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, and Bible study leaders are urged to apply.

Evangelism

Preach the Gospel of Christ through evangelism in cross-

cultural environments, offering the opportunity to hear and embrace the Good News. Live as Orthodox witnesses so others may come to know the saving love of Christ.

Construction

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

- **Alaska:** Catechism retreats (Bethel/Kuskokwim deanery)
- **Alaska:** Youth ministry (Ouzinkie)
- **Albania:** Mission Institute (Tirana)
- **Albania:** Youth ministry (Shen Vlash)
- **Albania:** Children's Home of Hope youth ministry (Shen Vlash)
- **Albania:** Womens' retreats (Tirana)
- **Ghana:** Teaching; celebrate the 25 year anniversary (Accra and Peki)
- **Guatemala:** Church construction (Coban)
- **Guatemala:** Hogar Rafael Ayau youth ministry (San Miguel del Lago)
- **Kenya:** Evangelism (Turkana)
- **Kenya:** Teaching (Nairobi)
- **Kenya:** Church construction, catechism, and health care (Turkana/Lokichar)
- **Moldova:** Womens' retreats (Orhei)
- **Moldova:** Youth camp (Orhei)
- **Tanzania:** Health care outreach (Bukoba)
- **Tanzania:** Clergy retreats (Bukoba)
- **Uganda:** Stewardship training (Kampala)
- **Uganda:** Health care and education (Gulu)

Youth Camp

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

Health Care

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

Participation Requirements

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

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

Contact

Inquire at OCMC regarding:

- Sponsorship opportunities: OCMC projects need financial support for church construction, youth camps, seminars, medical supplies, other (bibles, translators, field personnel), and support for OCMC Mission Team members
- Parish mission team projects
- Family and youth participation
- Seminarian scholarships
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Missionary Updates

BELOW: OCMC Missionary Anastasia Pamela Barksdale

ALBANIA

Anastasia Pamela Barksdale

OCMC Missionary Anastasia Pamela Barksdale, though temporarily back in the United States to share her work with her supporters, will be returning to Albania for her fourth term of 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 a short-term OCMC 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 will be held at the end of the children's camp.

The Bendo Family

After a summer of changes, Dn. Anastas Bendo was ordained a priest, Pres. Georgia was named Director of Protagonist School, and baby Maria Roxana was born. Pres. Georgia finds herself in the full swing of all of these roles: presbyter, principal, and mother of three. The Protagonist School now has 410 students from pre-school to 11th grade and over 50 staff members. In 2014, the school will be complete with a 12th grade. It has been a blessing for Pres. Georgia to watch the school grow. She recalls how when she first arrived in Tirana 10 years ago, it had less than 60 students! As Director of the school, she meets with parents, students, and staff and tries to set up a consistent schedule of classroom observations while working to arrange professional development trainings for the teachers. The responsibilities are numerous, but she is thankful for the challenges which, she feels, teach her so much. Meanwhile she continues to teach an after-school catechism group called



ABOVE: OCMC Missionaries Nathan and Gabriela Hoppe and family



ABOVE: OCMC Missionary Pres. Georgia Gilman Bendo



ABOVE: OCMC Missionary Jeffrey Macdonald



ABOVE: OCMC Missionary Dn. Stephanos Ritsi

"Spiritual Journey", where the focus this year is on major feast days. This catechism group grows every year.

Fr. Anastas serves liturgies at the Cathedral, works hard to complete his many translation projects, spends time with faithful, and helps the Archbishop wherever he is needed. This past fall, he was blessed to accompany His Beatitude on a trip to Serbia commemorating 1,700 years since

the Edict of Milan. The current issue of "Kerkim" (of which he is the editor) is also centered on this theme.

Please keep us and our children, Vasili (5), Evdokia (2 ½), and Maria (8 months) in your prayers.

The Hoppe Family

One of Gabriela Hoppe's main areas of ministry since September has been directing the

newly-launched Sunday School program at the Resurrection of Christ Cathedral. The Cathedral opened June 2012 but Sunday School facilities were not available until September 2013. Gabriela has worked hard with her staff to develop a dynamic program which fosters transformation in the lives of children and their families. She has used games, role-playing, amateur videos, songs, and other methods not simply to teach the children about their faith but to integrate it into their lives. As a result of this program, the attendance of children at liturgy has significantly increased over the past six months. It has been particularly rewarding to see parents who were not attending church become regulars because their children do not want to miss the Sunday School program. Please pray that God will be at work in the hearts of each of the children and parents connected with this program, and that He will bring many more.

One of the greatest joys for a missionary is to see the development of local leadership and to make themselves redundant through equipping and training local people. In this way the Church becomes self-sufficient, and the missionary can move on to new challenges. The Hoppes have taken a significant step in this process by forming a leadership team for the children, adolescent, and university ministry groups that they lead. Four of the young people they have been working with over the past several years have been given specific responsibilities for areas of the ministry. Please pray for Ana, Spiro, Marina, and Mikea as they take on new challenges. Please pray that they may have a vision for what God can do and dedicate themselves to working with His power to see it become a reality. Nathan and Gabriela are meeting weekly with the new ministry team for leadership training and to work together on leadership challenges. They are very excited by the growth in vision, capacity, and zeal that they have seen already.

Another area in which the Hoppes would very much appreciate your prayers in the coming months is in the launching of ministry groups for children and adolescents at the new All Saints Church that was opened in Tirana about one year ago. This is a small church building on the western edge of the city about half an hour by public transportation from the center of town. Current attendance at liturgy is 5-10 faithful. Please pray that God would work powerfully as the Hoppes seek to work with their ministry team to build bridges through which they can share the love of God with the people of this neighborhood.

In November, the Hoppes organized what has become an annual training program for teachers from the schools in Kosovo where they run day camps during the summer. Approximately 20 teachers participated in a packed 2-day program. The subject of this year's training was the theory of multiple intelligences and its application to



LEFT:
OCMC Missionary
Fr. John Chakos

classroom teaching and informal relationships with children. The training ministers to children and teachers in Kosovo by raising the capacity of teachers; it is also an excellent opportunity to build deeper relationships.

The Hoppes will be returning to the US again this summer for support team development. They will be traveling extensively in order to visit churches and individuals.

The Macdonald Family

Dr. Jeffrey and Caryn Macdonald and their family live in the village of Shen Vlash. Dr. Macdonald is teaching Church History at the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy where he also holds a Bible Study on the Gospel of John with some of the faculty. Caryn is educating their children at home and teaching English at the Academy.

The Ritsi Family

Dn. Stephanos and Dkn. Alexandria Ritsi have been in Albania for an entire year now. They continue with Albanian language study and enculturation.

On January 22nd, Stephanos was blessed to be ordained to the Diaconate by His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios. Dn. Stephanos looks forward to the challenge of learning the rubrics while also learning to liturgize in Albanian. Alexandria has enjoyed her first month as a Diakonia!

Dn. Stephanos and Dkn. Alexandria continue to build a vibrant ministry dedicated to serving and educating the youth in Albania. They are helping two students from Shen Vlash to build a youth group in the town of Rrushkull as part of the outreach of the Youth Office where Dn. Stephanos works. It has been beautiful to see this group slowly grow in strength as they come closer to each other and Christ.

Dn. Stephanos leads three separate Bible Studies for young adults. This semester, he will be teaching Christian education and youth ministry to all of the third and fourth year students at the Resurrection of Christ Theological Academy.

Dkn. Alexandria has thirty-five 6th grade English students that she teaches at the Protagonist School in Tirana. They are a lively bunch and always keep her on her toes! In

addition, she is co-teaching catechism (6th-9th grades) with Pres. Georgia Bendo. She also continues to teach character education (1st-8th grades). One new task for Dkn. Alexandria is that she is the Protagonist School representative for the Tirana Association of International Schools. Belonging to the TAIS has been a blessing because the schools have been able to share many methods and ideas.

In March, the Ritsis hosted an OCMC team, in coordination with the Youth Office, which led a retreat for young adult leaders at Shen Vlash Seminary. This retreat was based on a Hunger Strike program first done at St. Paul Orthodox Church in Irvine, CA. The retreat served as a model conference for these young adult leaders who will return to their home cities and lead the conference for youth in their area.

GUATEMALA

The Chakos Family

Since returning to Guatemala in December and again in January, Fr. John Chakos has been working with the Guatemalan clergy to establish a viable medical mission, which includes coordinating the shipment of medicines, the sending of a surgical team, and the opening of clinics in under-served communities of the church. He is also working on a program to raise up a core of sub-deacons who can assist the clergy during the worship services. The training of these candidates will take place at the seminary in Huehuetenango. Presbytera Alexandra continues to receive orders for clergy vestments, cassocks, and altar boy robes, which will be completed by our cadre of seamstresses in the villages.

Lastly, and most important of all, Fr. John has been supporting the clergy and church members as they cope with the tragic loss of their father in the faith, Fr. Andres Giron. The impact of his passing at such a critical time in the life of this fledgling Church has been immense. Because of the void that his falling asleep has created, Fr. John has been meeting with the clergy and Archbishop Athenagoras to help prepare for a smooth transition in the leadership of the Church.

The Rucker Family

Fr. David and Mat. Rozanne Rucker feel honored to serve among the tens of thousands of new

Mayan Orthodox Christians living in villages in Guatemala and southern Mexico. They live with Padre Evangelos Tuctuc, the priest-in-charge of many of the parishes serving these fledgling Orthodox faithful. Padre Evangelos has graciously welcomed them as part of his family, sharing his home and table in generous Guatemalan fashion. From their new home in Aguacate (in the highlands of Guatemala near the border with Mexico), they travel together to the churches that Padre Evangelos pastors. During the rainy season, even Padre's four-wheel-drive pick-up cannot always make it to the villages they try to reach, so they get out and walk the rest of the way. They often sleep on boards and use rainwater collected in barrels to bathe, but they feel that it is worth it to be able to celebrate a new Orthodox parish's first Divine Liturgy.

In Aguacate, Padre Evangelos has started a school for grades 8-12, alongside a pre-seminary program for young men following God's call to serve the Church. In numerous villages, young men told Fr. David and Mat. Rozanne, "I want to be a priest someday." When asked why, nearly all answered, "Because of Padre Evangelos! I want to tell people about Christ like he does." The Ruckers get to join Padre Evangelos in mentoring these students and lay leaders in the music, prayers, services, and sacraments of the Church.

Fr. David and Mat. Rozanne thank God for each individual and parish making this ministry possible. When they are in the USA, they speak and teach in parishes and Orthodox institutions, allowing the illustrations from our Central American brothers and sisters in Christ to inspire and strengthen the faith of their North American counterparts.

KENYA

The Colburn Family

Dr. Michael and Lisa Colburn continue to develop a software program for the translation and publication of liturgical texts, working closely with Fr. Seraphim Dedes (www.ematins.org). The software tool, AGES Liturgical Workbench, is now being used to generate Vespers, Matins, and the Divine Liturgy, automatically inserting the variable hymns and parts. They plan to officially release the first version of the source code this summer. In preparation for this, Michael went to Kenya last December to meet with His Eminence Archbishop Makarios. His Eminence requested that the software be used to create the next edition of the Priest's Service Book, to be published in a number of the languages spoken in Africa. The Colburns plan to be in Kenya this summer to teach people how to use the software and guide them through loading translations into the database. Lisa has assisted Michael by loading texts from a number of languages into the program.

Last November, Michael was privileged to give the annual mission week lecture at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology and at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. Michael also provided training in language-learning techniques to new prospects for missionary service during New Candidate Orientation at the Mission Center in February.

Meg Engelbach

Meg (Fotini) arrived in Kenya at the end of January and is already assimilating into life at Archbishop Makarios III Seminary in Nairobi. She is learning to speak the Gikuyu and Kiswahili languages, as well as beginning work in the Office of Translation. Some of her projects include entering the text of the Divine Liturgy, Orthros, and Vespers in three different languages (Kiswahili, Gikuyu, and Turkana) into a database for use in generating the services for print and web publications. She is also assisting Archbishop Makarios with various other tasks in the Archdiocesan Office. In March, Meg joined a short-term OCMC Mission Team that was sent to the remote Turkana region.

MONGOLIA

Kurt Bringerud

Kurt continues to use his work as an English language instructor to build relationships that naturally introduce people to the Orthodox Faith. Please keep him and his family in your prayers as they prepare to return to the United States this summer to share their work and raise support.

ROMANIA

The Frantz Family

Floyd and Ancuta Frantz continue their work in serving poor and underprivileged families and individuals in Romania. Through the Orthodox Church, the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center (PTFC) currently provides food, day-care, and counseling services to more than 35 families at risk of abandoning their children in Cluj. The PTFC also helps these mothers to find work and to organize their lives so that abandonment of their children is not seen as the only way of survival for them and their children.

During this past year the St. Dimitrie Program has helped start two new counseling centers in Romania, while continuing its addictions treatment programs in Cluj. In addition to these existing counseling programs, educating the clergy in Romania about the disease concept of addictions is now seen as a priority. For 2014, much of the energy and resources of the St. Dimitrie Program are being channeled into this effort.

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.



ABOVE: OCMC Mission Specialists Fr. David and Mat. Rozanne Rucker (right)



ABOVE: OCMC Mission Specialist Dr. Michael Colburn



RIGHT: OCMC Missionaries Floyd and Ancuta Frantz

Proclaiming the Faith in UGANDA

by Markella Balasis

The roots of the Orthodox faith reaching the people of Uganda are nearly one hundred years old, going back to the late 1920's. The exploration of a few young leaders searching for the true Christian faith led their group to the canonical Orthodox Church, into which they were welcomed officially by the Patriarchate of Alexandria in 1946. The Church endured difficult times during the political instability of the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's, but by the grace of God, has weathered that storm.

The Orthodox Christian Mission Center has had the tremendous blessing to share in the development of the Orthodox Church of Uganda through the Support a Mission Priest (SAMP) program. The monetary grants provided through the SAMP program supplement the stipend that a priest receives from the local diocese. In this way, the additional assistance from SAMP enables a priest to give full attention to his pastoral ministry and still provide for his and his family's physical needs, without needing to work a second job or find other means of income.

Over the past decade, the SAMP program has offered support to more than 20 priests in Uganda serving under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan Jonah. Since SAMP sponsorship began, the number of ordained clergy has grown to 63 priests and deacons serving the thousands of Orthodox Christians in Uganda, not including several other clergy who are pursuing further education to assist their ministry. Some estimates place the Orthodox Christian population in Uganda at close to 300,000 people, or roughly 1% of the general population. While 63 priests seems highly inadequate to serve so many people—an average of more than 4,700 people per priest—the number of priests has increased from just a few years ago, and continues to grow.

Fr. Julius Orach has witnessed the ongoing transformation of the Ugandan Church since he was born. His parents were among some of the first converts to Orthodoxy in Uganda, having been baptized in 1948. After he completed a certificate in theological education, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1999. Fr. Julius serves the parish of St. Lawrence in Koro. In addition to his responsibilities to his parish, he also serves as dean for all of the priests in the Gulu area, one of nine deaneries in the Archdiocese.

Fr. George Lakony is another priest that has been a pivotal part of the growth of Orthodoxy in Uganda. He was born in the same

village of Koro where Fr. Julius currently serves, but not to an Orthodox family. Fr. George came to embrace the Orthodox faith as a young man after meeting an Orthodox priest. Though he initially trained to be a carpenter, he answered a calling to the holy priesthood in 2002. Fr. George now ministers to the people of the parish of St. Basil in Labora, also part of the Gulu deanery.

Fr. Julius, Fr. George, and the other Orthodox priests in Uganda have helped bring many programs to fruition in order to better minister to their people. Throughout the Archdiocese, 51 mothers groups and 50 youth groups meet on a regular basis. The Archdiocese has organized 18 health centres, as well as numerous primary and secondary schools for all ages. Such ministries could not be established without the leadership of the clergy. These priests serve as the unifying factor in developing and guiding all of the programs and ministries of the Church.

More recently, the clergy and the laity of the Church in Uganda have faced a new challenge due to the worldwide economic crisis. Because of the crisis, significant funding sources have arrived infrequently or ceased altogether. The Church's leaders have risen to this challenge, however, and are committed to adapting accordingly.

A short-term mission team sent from OCMC witnessed this first-hand in December 2013. That mission team collaborated with some of the leaders from the Ugandan Church to engage clergy and lay people in a seminar to introduce the concept of Christian stewardship. The discussions explored the Scriptural basis for stewardship and shared many ideas as to how a stewardship model can be implemented in Uganda. His Eminence Metropolitan Jonah and the clergy were especially encouraged by the outcome of the seminar, hopeful that a successful stewardship program will ensure the contin-

ued growth of the Orthodox Church in Uganda.

Through the SAMP program, OCMC and the Orthodox in North America now have a unique opportunity to partner with the Orthodox community in Uganda as they begin this groundbreaking transition towards adopting a stewardship model. The financial sponsorship through the SAMP program will continue to provide steady and consistent support while the Church sows the seeds of stewardship and nurtures the growth of this program. One of the lay participants in the December seminar offered a beautiful analogy to describe this collaborative relationship: "OCMC [brings] the hooks and the nets; we are the ones to drop them into the water!"



1. His Eminence Jonah, Archbishop of Kampala and All Uganda, has helped foster significant growth in the number of Orthodox Christian clergy and laity within the Archdiocese he shepherds.

2. Clergy and lay people in Uganda listen to a speaker at a seminar about Christian stewardship. People from across the Archdiocese of Kampala and All Uganda gathered last year to learn how the Church in Uganda can support itself and continue to grow.

3. Fr. Julius Orach, who serves the parish of St. Lawrence in Koro. He serves as dean for all of the priests in the Gulu area, one of nine deaneries in the Archdiocese.

4. Fr. George Lakony came to embrace the Orthodox faith as a young man after meeting an Orthodox priest. He felt called to the priesthood and now ministers to the people of St. Basil in Labora in the Gulu deanery of the Archdiocese of Kampala and All Uganda.

5. Fr. Martin Ritsi, OCMC Executive Director, and **Fr. Ted Pisarchuk**, OCMC Board Member, celebrate the Divine Liturgy with some of the 63 clergy in Uganda during a recent visit as part of an OCMC Mission Team that helped teach principles of stewardship and self-sustainability.





Children from San Esteban, Huehuetla, Mexico, gather for a Vacation Bible School session that was conducted by a team of Orthodox Christians from the United States last year.

Serving the Aztec Orthodox Christians

by Fr. Ted Pisarchuk

Many are surprised to learn that there are thousands of Aztecs in Mexico who are Orthodox Christians.

According to local oral history, in 1925 a missionary priest by the name of Fr. Armen Monte de Honor evangelized the Aztec people in and around the foothills of Hidalgo, Mexico, a mountainous area which is located 200+ miles north of Mexico City. The first church planted was San Esteban, (St. Stephens), in San Esteban, Huehuetla, Mexico.

Fr Armen served the area for many years and upon his death, Fr. Jesus Gutierrez continued this work until his death. During the tenure of these two priests, more than ten Orthodox communities were planted amongst the indigenous peoples and served regularly. The clergy traveled between these communities either by foot or burro. Because no priest was available to serve the 5,000 Aztec Orthodox Christians in the area, Subdeacon Jesus, who is attached

to Santa Cruz Church in Pisaflores (6-8 hours by horse), until recently served area churches traveling mostly on horseback.

Beginning with San Esteban, His Eminence Archbishop Alejo, Archbishop of Mexico City and Mexico, Orthodox Church in America (OCA), is working to revitalize the churches in the area. San Esteban is a subsistent Aztec village. Any cash income is from coffee bean farming. Most homes are uninsulated concrete block homes with metal corrugated roofs.

Cooking is over a campfire-like stove. Few homes have refrigeration. Everyone keeps chicken for poultry and eggs. No one uses tobacco, has eyeglasses, or a cell phone. There are no fashion trends. The primary mode of transportation is burro. Life is lived simply and beautifully. Some have never left this isolated remote mountain village.

While the people have very little in means, they are not poor. They are rich being human. They always smile and are happy with what they have. There are no complaints. They are just living life, not worried about what "the Joneses" have, not trying to find happiness from things. They do not struggle with the material temptations that Americans have.

Archbishop Alejo is the first on the ground OCA Mexican missionary bishop. He is working to raise up indigenous missionary priests, planting new churches and revitalizing old communities. A seminary has been established at Annunciation Cathedral in Mexico City.

At the request of His Eminence Archbishop Alejo, in January 2013 the OCA Department of Evangelism sent

an exploratory mission team to both Pisaflores and San Esteban to assess how the OCA resources can assist to revitalize this remote area. The team traveled eight hours via bus, off-road vehicle, and boat over mountainous highways, grade roads, and a river.

At San Esteban team members were told to wait at the cross at the entrance of town. Soon after arrival, the team heard a mariachi band approaching in the distance. As the band played, they were warmly greeted by over 150 people, the men donning the team members with marigold-like flower leis and crowns and the women handing them bouquets of palms and flowers with beeswax candles burning. They then censed the team members with ceramic chalice-like censers burning local bark for incense as large bottle rockets burst in the air. Following the 10-piece mariachi band, the team processed to the church and celebrated a service of thanksgiving. Afterwards they were welcomed by the local leaders in both Spanish and the local Aztec dialect. The band started to play again and led the team on a 20-minute procession around the center of town. Everyone returned to the church and offered some more prayers of thanksgiving. The hospitality was very humbling.

It is striking how similar the people of the Mexican Orthodox Church are to those of the Alaskan Orthodox Church. Both are native people. Both speak the national language and the local dialect. Both live subsistently. Both are being aggressively proselytized by Protestants. Both share the simplicity and beauty of life. Because of their subsistent lifestyle, they have been underserved by the Church for many years. Even though a great distance exists between Alaska and Mexico, the similarities are astounding.

The Aztecs are just like the Eskimos that St. Herman evangelized 200+ years ago. On November 13, 2011, Archbishop Benjamin, Archbishop of San Francisco and the West, OCA brought a relic of St. Herman to



the Cathedral in Mexico City. That evening during Vespers, the icon of St. Herman began to stream fragrant myrrh. The icon only streamed that evening, and we cannot say too much about it, other than it may be safe to surmise that St. Herman was glad to now be amongst the native people that he loves, blesses this work, and is a fervent intercessor for this work.

The people of San Esteban and the surrounding area are hungry for God. Because of the economic realities of the area, they have not had a priest in residence for decades. When one travels the area, one can see many Orthodox village churches that are now closed. The people in these villages are Orthodox and unchurched.

The first step in the revitalization of this area took place when His Eminence Archbishop Alejo assigned the Hieromonk Fr. Serafin Mendoza to the area. Fr Serafin now travels a few times a year to serve and is preparing to permanently live in San Esteban and evangelize the surrounding area. The Diocese has purchased land and plans are now being made to build the rectory. Once the rectory is finished and Fr Serafin is a resident of San Esteban, we will be raising funds to purchase a four-wheel drive Jeep to enable Fr Serafin to travel between the estimated 10 unchurched Orthodox communities of the surrounding area.

In an effort to jump-start the revitalization of the area, in July 2013 at the invitation of His Eminence Archbishop Alejo, the first ever short-term mission teaching team went to San Esteban. Seven Spanish-speaking laypeople from various parishes about the US served on the team.

In the mornings, the team conducted a Vacation Bible School with the

children of the village. Children came prepared with notebooks and pencils and throughout the whole week were excited to learn. They even learned how to sing Holy God and sang it during the Liturgy. In the evenings everyone celebrated Vespers and other services followed by catechism and brief lessons on liturgical singing.

On Thursday morning, the Divine Liturgy was celebrated and the entire parish sang the responses. Following liturgy we processed around the village accompanied by a band. On Thursday evening a storm blew through, and the whole village was blacked out. Still, everyone came to the candlelight service and listened intently to the preaching and teaching.

The Orthodox Christians of San Esteban were extremely thankful for a visit, and many asked us to come back. They are truly hungry for the Good News and are very receptive to it.

We hope to expand this teaching ministry to other underserved areas of the foothills of Hidalgo, Mexico, in conjunction with OCMC. To this end, an OCMC Teaching Team will visit the remote community of San Esteban to offer catechism to both youth and adults. In the mornings, the youth will be gathered and taught basic lessons on the Orthodox Faith. In the afternoons, the Team will offer adult catechism and have time to pray together and enjoy fellowship. The Team will also visit and celebrate the Divine Liturgy in Mexico City.

Please pray for the OCMC Mission Team that will serve in San Esteban this summer and for the Orthodox Faithful in Mexico. If you would like to be a part of this unique team, please contact OCMC's Teams Director, Andrew Lekos by phone at 1-877-463-6784, or by e-mail at teams@ocmc.org. Visit www.ocmc.org for more information.

RIGHT : San Esteban, Huehuetla, Mexico, is home to a vibrant community of Orthodox faithful. Here they prayerfully approach to receive the Eucharist.

TOP: A team of Orthodox Christians from the United States ministered to the people of San Esteban in 2013. In the summer of 2014, OCMC will be sending another team to continue this witness and fellowship in conjunction with the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) Department of Evangelism.



Planting the Seeds of Missions in the Hearts of the Youth:

OCMC Ambassadors Teaching Up the Next Generation of *Missionaries*

Train up the child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it. PROVERBS 22:6

by Kenneth Kidd



TOP : Youth from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA are offered the opportunity to participate on annual service trips here in the United States. A couple of summers ago, the youth came to north Florida, participated in a missions retreat at the OCMC office, and offered their service at a variety of non-profit organizations.

BOTTOM: Youth from San Diego participate in a symbolic activity that opened their hearts to the fact that there are children around the world who die from hunger.

Earlier this spring, I had the blessing to sit and visit with Cleo Constantin, servant on numerous OCMC mission teams over the years and member of St. Basil the Great Greek Orthodox Church in San Jose, California. During our visit, she described remembering the missionaries that would visit the Vacation Church School she attended as a young girl at a small Baptist church in her neighborhood. The stories of the work of the church, as well as the Christian children like her in other parts of the world, would stay with her and be a large part of her personal journey into the Orthodox Church decades later. Christ's call to "take the Gospel to all nations" (Matthew 28:19) was planted deep into her heart, and it continues to bear fruit to this day as Cleo serves as an advocate on a multi-parish missions committee in San Jose that builds awareness, raises funds, and recruits mission team members. Later this summer, Cleo looks forward to serving alongside her grand-daughter on a mission team to Guatemala, inspiring another generation.

Throughout Orthodox archdioceses and parishes across North America, OCMC Ambassadors are serving their communities as they assist local clergy and "train up" children to share Christ's light throughout their local neighborhoods and throughout our world. Together, they are building a culture of missions that is not only a profound activity of the local parish, but an integral, natural part of parish life.

Stephanie Hall, OCMC Ambassador
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Charleston, South Carolina

During the summer of 2013, Stephanie was asked to assist in the development of their parish's annual Vacation Church School curriculum. Inspired by the words of St. John Chrysostom and a homily offered by Fr. Luke Veronis, OCMC Board Member and former missionary to Kenya and Albania, Stephanie built a curriculum focused on the missions theme "The Universe is Our Parish." During the week, the children studied the lives of missionary saints including St. Cyril and St. Cosmas, as well as participated in a water walk that simulated the chore that many throughout the world must perform each day to collect water for their fami-



BELOW : Youth from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA offer dinner at a Florida homeless shelter as part of their annual service trip.



LEFT : The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA offers missions opportunities to all ages of youth, including an annual college-age trip serving special-needs orphans in Ukraine.

lies. A highlight of the week was an activity in which the children were missionaries themselves. The children baked cookies and filled small bags with them, including a Bible verse too. One afternoon, the children walked door-to-door throughout the neighborhood immediately around the parish visiting with neighbors, giving out the bags of cookies, and offering a witness of Christ's love for them.

**Maria Kelmis, OCMC Ambassador
St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church,
San Diego, California**

Recently, Maria shared this with me about her work as an Ambassador in San Diego: "In the past four years that I have been organizing OCMC events for St. Spyridon and other parishes in the San Diego area, I found that coordinating an event that created visual memories was what made the experience popular to the youth, and an annual mission walk is at the heart of this ministry. The first year we carried water in buckets to honor those who must walk to collect water each day. This was a huge success; the children have carried this memory, and to this day I remain affectionately known as the 'bucket lady.' I continued the subsequent years by having the children carry something on the walk again. The second year we carried sandwiches to offer to the homeless along the way; the third year the theme was international mission priests, and we carried framed photos of the ten priests that

we were assisting through OCMC over our heads as we walked to demonstrate support – and when our hands grew tired, we passed the photo to our neighbor to show that we can't do it alone. This year we are carrying and dropping off letters in a common mailbox that we will write to long-term missionaries to show our support in correspondence and prayers, in addition to our financial support.

"I think it's important to plant the seeds of mission in our youth because they are our future and they will carry on where we leave off – but the reality I have discovered is that the more I share my mission 'walk' with the youth, the more I am inspired by them to do even more. So, in actuality, the youth participation becomes a cycle of giving. This is the same way I felt years ago in Uganda when I traveled there as part of an OCMC mission team. I went there to help them build a church and they, in return, built a church in my heart because of the example of faith and love they became to me."

**Natalie Kapeluck Nixon,
Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministry
Ukrainian Orthodox Archdiocese of the
USA, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

For many years it has been a blessing to work alongside Natalie from the Ukrainian Orthodox Archdiocese. Here are some thoughts she recently shared with me.

"Instilling a missionary heart in our youth should be foremost in our youth ministry work. When our Lord commissioned

the Apostles to 'Go Forth!' (MATTHEW 28:19), He did not add the codicil, 'For Adults Only'. If we truly view our children/youth as full members of the Body of Christ, His Church, from their Chrismation - then they have also inherited the command to 'Go Forth!' as a part of their life in Christ.

"Proverbs 22:6 teaches us, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' It is difficult to train up our youth in a world view atmosphere focused on self. Many times the satisfaction of self through good deeds such as service projects and community outreach is more about feeling good than about simply taking care of and witnessing to our brother and sisters as Christ has commanded. Providing our youth as many opportunities to serve Christ by serving our brothers and sisters and by being a living gospel is one of the best ways we can train them UP!

"The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry has taken this call to train up our youth to have a missionary heart - to heart! We have integrated into our camping ministry opportunities to learn about missions and actively participate in that work. In 2010, the campers participated in the OCMC Walk for the Turkana. They obtained sponsors prior to arriving at camp and then devoted a part of the day learning about OCMC, the growing Church in Turkana, Kenya, and conducting the walk. The camp's neighbors extended their grounds for use during the walk, enabling the campers to be witnesses outside of our community concerning the work of OCMC.

"In addition to integration in our camping ministry, the UOC Youth Department has attempted to provide national and parish opportunities for growing a missionary heart. I encourage you to take up our Lord's command to 'Go Forth!' not only in your own personal journey but in training up our youth."



220 Mason Manatee Way, St. Augustine, FL 32086



BECOME AN OCMC AMBASSADOR AND BE A RESOURCE YOURSELF!

OCMC continues to be a resource as you build a culture of missions in your parish, in your family, and within your own heart. Do the children in your parish look forward to participation in missions and outreach ministries the same way they anticipate being old enough to go to summer camp? Are they looking forward to being a part of outreach to local nursing homes, homeless shelters, and/or mission trips, or are these activities not a regular part of parish life? OCMC has years of missions-related lesson plans as well as activity ideas to assist you in planting these seeds of missions!

Helping create this missions culture is just one of the many beautiful ways that OCMC Ambassadors serve their local priest and parish community.

To find out more about the OCMC Ambassador Program, or to sign up to be an Ambassador, please contact Kenneth Kidd, OCMC Annual Gifts Officer, at Kenny@ocmc.org or at 904-829-5132, ext. 161.