

# There's Room for YOU on Our 2019 Mission Teams!

If God is calling you to share His message of love and truth with the world, there are plenty of opportunities on OCMC Mission Teams, including our first-ever trips to Colombia in July and Sweden in October! Team members with experience in healthcare or teaching are always welcome, but most important of all is a willing spirit and a love for our beautiful Orthodox Faith.

### Some of our current openings include:

June 24-July 6	Teaching in Indonesia
July 1-13	Teaching in Indonesia
July 1-13	Teaching in Colombia
July 22-31	Youth work in Alaska
August 6-17	Youth work in Alaska



There are many, many more exciting and rewarding Mission Teams on our 2019 calendar. See the latest listings at [https://www.ocmc.org/about/open\\_teams.aspx](https://www.ocmc.org/about/open_teams.aspx).



Serving on an OCMC Mission Team lets you touch countless lives ... and make countless new friends as you share Christ's love!



**Lazarus** and his sisters were friends of the Lord Jesus. When Lazarus became ill, his sisters sent a report to Jesus in Galilee. But He waited before traveling to their home, saying, "Let us go into Judea that I might awake My friend who sleep." By the time He arrived, Lazarus had died. Jesus mourned His friend's death. He went to Lazarus's tomb, ordered the stone be moved, and commanded, "Lazarus, come forth." Even though Lazarus had been dead for four days, he immediately stood up and walked out! This wondrous event is what we celebrate on Lazarus Saturday, the Saturday before Holy Week.

**Apolytikion of Lazarus Saturday**  
O Christ our God, before Your Passion, You raised Lazarus from the dead to confirm the common Resurrection for all. Therefore, we carry the symbols of victory as did the youths, and we cry out to You, the victor over death, "Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord."

**Kontakion of Lazarus Saturday**  
Christ, everyone's joy, the truth, the light, life, the resurrection of the world, has by His goodness appeared to those on earth. He is the archetype of the resurrection, granting divine forgiveness to all.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSION CENTER

# MISSION

Reports from around the world for supporters and friends of Orthodox Christian Mission Center



SPECIAL  
TEAMS  
EDITION

## Short-term Service Leads Couple to Life as Missionaries

Theophani and Steve Sarigianis are sharing the Orthodox Faith with the world, and your support makes you part of their exciting adventure!

*Your support of OCMC Mission Teams helped this young couple answer God's call!*

Steve Sarigianis and Theophani Damianakis met in college and bonded over a shared sense that the Lord was calling them to the mission field. Now, almost seven years later, Steve and Theophani are married, veterans of multiple OCMC short-term mission trips, and are preparing to become full-time missionaries.

As a generous partner and friend of OCMC, you play a big part in Steve and Theophani's story — a story that's just beginning!

Theophani has served on Mission Teams in Albania and Kenya, while Steve has been to those nations plus Guatemala and Alaska. The couple has served together on an OCMC Team to Kenya. Every trip, Steve says, made

God's call in their lives plainer. They also reveal how badly the world needs the Church and Her witness. Theophani adds, "Being able to go to places like Albania, where young people yearn to know more about Jesus, or to Kenya, where tribes are hearing His Name for the first time, made our call even more clear."

*Continued on page 3*

## MY NEXT GIFT TO SUPPORT ORTHODOX MISSIONS

**Yes, Fr. Martin!** You can count on me to continue to share the Gospel through my prayerful support of OCMC Missions Teams. Here is my gift of: **Here is my gift of:**

☐ \$XX1   ☐ \$XX2   ☐ \$XX3   ☐ \$\_\_\_\_\_

☐ I want to join the Sts. Cyril & Methodius Society with a monthly gift of: \$\_\_\_\_\_

To give online visit [www.ocmc.org/donate](http://www.ocmc.org/donate). Thank you!



*God bless you for your faithfulness and generosity!*

Your gift is tax deductible. Please make your check payable to OCMC and send it to 220 Mason Manatee Way, St. Augustine, FL 32086. Please remember OCMC in your estate planning.

2019 SPRING NEWSLETTER



SPRING 2019

GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS.  
— MATTHEW 28:19



Great Lent:  
Giving, not  
“Giving Up”



Rev. Fr. Martin Ritsi  
Executive Director

For many, Lent is a time to sacrifice the things they love. “I’m giving up chocolate for Lent,” people say, or maybe TV. These days, many people give up Twitter or Facebook for Lent.

As Orthodox Christians, you and I know there is more — infinitely more — to the season of Great Lent than simply doing without sweets. It’s a time of intense spiritual preparation for the Lord’s Resurrection — a resurrection foretold in the raising of Lazarus that you’ll read about later in this newsletter. A time to focus on our sin and our separation from Jesus.

We do this through worship, prayer, fasting, and also through the discipline of alms-giving, which means sharing our time, talent, and treasure to support the Church and Her Mission in the world. In contrast with those who give up what they love for Lent, this is a chance for us to unite ourselves more fully to that which we love the most: Our Lord and His Holy Church.

I hope you will choose to make support of OCMC part of your prayer and alms-giving praxis during Great Lent. As this special Mission Teams issue shows, your generosity shares God’s Love and strengthens His Church around the world. Prayerfully consider joining an OCMC Mission Team this Lent as well. Thank you for all you do! May you and those you love be blessed during this special season.

In Christ,  
*Fr. Martin Ritsi*  
Fr. Martin

PS: OCMC plans to send out more Mission Teams than ever this year! They need your prayers and support ... and they need YOU! Please see the article on page 4 about ways you could join us on upcoming Mission Teams. And thanks again!

YOUR Support Makes All  
the Difference! Here’s Why

When we say your giving makes OCMC’s work possible, we really mean it. Your generosity is the engine that sends 20 or more OCMC Mission Teams — nearly 200 volunteers — around the world every year to work on projects specifically requested by our Orthodox brothers and sisters in the field. Every one of those projects is underwritten by donors like you. Without that financial support, they just couldn’t happen!

### Your Giving:



Connects you and your parish to the global mission work of the Orthodox Church.



Helps Team Members and Missionaries be faithful to God’s call on their lives.



Puts your money to work supporting the things that matter most to you.



Honors Christ’s command to share His message with the world!

## \$1 = \$2.50

Plus, every \$1 you give to support OCMC Mission Teams activates more than \$1.50 in additional funding from other sources to support our teams and projects.

IN HIS OWN WORDS...

I Knew I Was Teaching Something  
They’d Never Heard Before

by Timothy Halverson • 2018 Albania Team Member

Last summer I was blessed to serve on an OCMC Mission Team at the Home of Hope orphanage on the grounds of Shen Vlash Monastery, the holiest site in Albania. The orphanage houses up to thirty children, giving them a place to live, food, education, and endless amounts of love.



The children at the Home of Hope orphanage in Albania loved learning with their new friends from America!

My job was to interact with the kids: to listen, to teach, and to try to give them some joy and fun. My main tasks were teaching an acting class and discussing a book with the older children. Every morning we would eat breakfast, sing together, review the daily Bible verses, read and discuss the book, and go to class. After lunch we played sports, did arts and crafts, or went on walks. In the evenings everyone prayed together in the chapel, had dinner, and read more of the book as a whole group.

Once, I asked the children, where do we see God? Their answer was, “in church.” I told them we can see God everywhere. We see Him when someone does something kind for us, or when someone forgives us; God works through each of us throughout our lives. He does not go away once we leave the doors of the church. Moments like these, where I knew I was teaching them something they had never heard before, really stick with me.

Some of these kids have been through more, at ten years old, than I will ever have to deal with, yet their spirit is not broken. They persevere no matter what. Being with these children in a place like that was so humbling. We grew close so fast; the kids and I both cried when I had to leave. But I promised I would do everything I can to come back. There is work to be done there.

Steve and Theophani ... continued from page 1

Theophani says they also realized “we can never take the Church for granted.” That’s a real danger for cradle Orthodox Christians in the U.S., she explains. “Not everyone knows about salvation, about Jesus Christ.”

**Your faithful support of OCMC touches lives in so many ways — not only in the far corners of the world, but here at home in the lives of wonderful young people like Steve and Theophani! You’ve already helped them start down their path of long-term mission work. Please sustain them with your prayers and generous giving. Thank you so much!**

His Grace Bishop Athanasius (left) of blessed memory performed the Sacrament of Marriage for Steve and Theophani. They are now exploring service in the Diocese of Kisumu and Western Kenya as OCMC Missionaries.

