

2024 Mission Sunday Primary Grade Lesson

Script for PowerPoint Presentation

Slide 1

Today is Mission Sunday, recognized and set aside by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in America for all Orthodox churches to focus on this essential practice in the Orthodox faith. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world for a reason. He told how He would save all people and reunite them to God. He gave all the people a commandment to take part in this sacred mission. We will learn two passages from the Bible: Matthew 28, known as the Great Commission, and Romans 10:14-15. Then we will learn about a modern-day missionary family.

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Great Commission Verse

Sometimes referred to as the Last Command, these were Jesus's last words to His disciples before He ascended into heaven: Go and tell other people the good news of God's love. Jesus wanted everyone, all people, in the world to know God and love one another. Everyone is called to share this good news with others. We are all called to tell other people about God.

The Great Commission is also the mission of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), the missions and evangelism agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States. OCMC's mission is to "make disciples of all nations" by bringing people to Christ and His Church.

Slide 3 – Memory Verse with movements

Slide 4 Romans Memory Verse

"Unless they are sent."

Who sends missionaries? Jesus, of course, but also His Church. Missionaries need support to go and cannot do so alone. They have the Church to send, train, equip, support, and pray for them. Missionaries are the beautiful feet that bring the gospel of peace

Who is the Church? We all are—the ones who are called to share the gospel of peace.

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Memory Verse with movements

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Today, we are going to learn about a beautiful white church that looks out on the blue sea of Tonga. Tonga is an island in the South Pacific (point out Tonga on the map). This is the Church of Saint George (pictured right). 15 years ago, a few Orthodox Christians came to Tonga to build an Orthodox church. It is not finished. But already the new church is growing and glorifying God. New churches grow because God wants us to tell others about His love and mercy.

Many people came to help build the church. But in all that time, there has only been a priest for a year and a half. Until now, there was no one there to care for this infant parish.

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For three years, all work at the Tonga Mission stopped because of COVID. The grounds around the church became overgrown with weeds, the walls were bare, and the floors were dusty and cracked...

Next to the Church of St. George is a little chapel dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul. In this chapel, no Divine Liturgy has been sung for three years. This is because this church did not have a priest or a missionary to take care of it. Do you think God called someone to go and help this church? Yes! God did call someone, a family to serve as missionaries and help His Tonga Mission.

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That family is the Jones family. They heard God calling them to serve His Church in Tonga, which is far from their home in Alaska. Though they had to leave their home, they desired to share God's love and help the Church there to grow.

When Michael Jones first heard about the Tonga Mission the Lord spoke to his heart. He knew God wanted him to go and help build the church, but Michael did not know if his wife Megan felt the same. Megan was not sure at first about becoming a missionary. She thought about the Bible story of the boy who offered Jesus the five loaves and two fish. Because of his gift, Jesus was able to feed the five thousand people. Megan believed God wanted her to do the same by offering her gifts and trusting that He would multiply them.

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God has also prepared the nation of Tonga in a beautiful way. Two hundred years ago, other Christian missionaries came to Tonga. The king became a Christian and dedicated his nation to Christ. The people of Tonga were set free. They love their Christian traditions. Their motto is "God and Tonga are our inheritance." The Tongan people are smart and have understanding hearts. When they learn about the Orthodox Church, they like its traditions and beauty. They say the beauty of the "little white church" tells us that something good is coming to Tonga.

The Tonga flag is one of many ways Christianity has formed the country. The shortened cross of red is a symbol of the Christian faith, and red symbolizes the blood shed by Jesus on the Cross.

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Michael and Megan work alongside Fr. Bartholomew and his wife, Presbyteria Lydia. Together they are helping to restore the church in Tonga. Even their children help to serve by chopping weeds on the church grounds and chanting during the services.

The challenge to each of us is, first, to live the Orthodox life. To live so that the gospel of peace shines through us to everyone around us. Next, we pray and ask God how He wants us to help and serve His Church. What are some things you can start doing now to bring the gospel of peace to others? Can you help clean up your community like the Jones family and Fr. Bartholomew and his wife are doing?

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Fr. Bartholomew (right) and his family came to Tonga to be missionaries under the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Zealand, and he now serves as the priest for the Tonga mission. Michael and Fr. Bartholomew are working together to tell people about Jesus. That God loves all people.

Although he is not a priest, God called Michael to use his gifts as a carpenter. Megan uses her gifts as a teacher. Both are helping to grow the Church in Tonga. Both are OCMC Missionaries. When asked why his family became missionaries, Michael said, “We came because we could, and no one else was coming.”

Their mission work in Tonga is supported by OCMC and its many supporters in the United States, like you, who believe in the important work of Orthodox missions.

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For now, they celebrate the liturgy in the small chapel of Saints Peter and Paul. Every day, work on the church continues, and soon it will be ready. Already, the church itself has begun to tell the people of Tonga that “God has come to live among the people.”

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The Jones family and Fr. Bartholomew’s family are living an Orthodox life while building the church. They are the “beautiful feet” that bring the gospel of peace to Tonga. They understand that growing the Church will take time. Because relationships take years to grow. Please pray for them, and also for all those whose lives they will touch with the good news of God’s love.

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Tonga Mission Tour – 4 minutes video introducing the people in Tonga and the Jones Family, <https://youtu.be/NWX4ggLoJyE>.

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Activity 1 – fill in the blank with the correct word picture.

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Answer Key to Activity 1

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Pray - pray for Orthodox missions in Tonga and all around the world. As you pray, be opened to see if God might be calling you to serve someday alongside the Jones family or other missionaries. Ask God how He can use your gifts and call others to be missionaries. Remember what Michael said, “We came because we could, and no one else was coming.”

Give - help OCMC by collecting money in your coinboxes so that more can be done to share God’s love. Ask your family if you as a family can support a missionary. Also ask your priest if you as a community may support a missionary.

Go - pray that more people will respond to God’s call to be missionaries. If you don’t feel called to go, see how you can serve as an OCMC Ambassador in your parish or join a mission team when you are a little older.