

Just the Facts: How to Build a Church in Tanzania

By Linda J. Hewitt

The St. Paul's Missions Committee – consisting of **Anthony & Lara Callas, Nadine Iskander, Steve & Carolyn Kouracos, Bill Marutsos, John & Kristi Nikas, Paul Sardis, Robert & Jennifer Schipsi, Paul & Pamela Williamson,** Father Steve and myself – was fortunate to be able to meet with Father Martin and Pres. Renee Ritsi of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center on Monday, November 20, 2006. We had many questions for them! Much work still lies ahead, but they answered many of the nuts-and-bolts questions everyone has been asking. Here are the answers.

We will be building a church in the Bukoba diocese in western Tanzania. The area is remote, poor and needy, but rapidly progressing. The exact location has not been chosen yet. That decision will be made by Bishop Jeronymos, who Father Martin thinks highly of. The Bishop is fluent in Greek and speaks good English. He was educated in Thessaloniki, Greece among other places and is noted for his humility. He has been working hard to establish churches in this area as well as building a high school and other structures. There is also a seminary nearby preparing new priests for all of the churches that are being built! So far there are more churches than there are priests available, so each priest is responsible for multiple churches and there are trained catechists who help out. This is partly due to the fact that people are not well-educated in this part of the world and there are fewer seminary candidates. The Bishop is working hard to change that.

Bishop Jeronymos believes in making the local populace contribute to the building of a church and we will be working hand-in-hand with the people who will be worshipping at the church we

build. The locals will be responsible for pouring the foundation and gathering the raw materials, which could be stones, wood, or adobe bricks, depending on the area. Then we will be primarily engaged in raising the walls. The more technical aspects, such as the roof and windows, will be built by more skilled artisans. We will have someone on site supervising the entire process, but basically St. Paul's will be providing two teams of 10 to 12 people over a month's time, two weeks for each team. The first team will be in Tanzania from July 3, 2007 to July 17, 2007, with the second team to follow from July 14, 2007 to August 2, 2007.



We will be lodging close to the site, perhaps in a hostel built for that purpose, or in a building nearby. Previous mission teams were housed in a school building. So we will have a roof over our heads and we will not be sleeping on the ground. There will be pit toilets provided. We will need to bring sleeping bags and mosquito netting, as well as work gloves and boots. Father Martin also recommended ibuprofen to ease the aches and pains at the end of the day!

Everyone who is interested in going must fill out a 4-page application which can be downloaded from www.ocmc.org. You must be an Orthodox Christian in good standing with the Church, with no physical impediments, and endorsed by your spiritual father. It is the policy of the OCMC that each person must be 18 years of age or older. Once accepted to the Team, each person is responsible for raising the funds to go on the trip, as well as obtaining a passport and all necessary vaccinations. The cost will be \$4060 for a two week stay and \$4200 for a month-long stay. This covers round-trip airfare at missionary rates, local transporta-

tion, team lodging and meals, materials and supplies, orientation, visa fee, a gift to the local church, and a donation to the OCMC to cover general operating and administrative costs. Out-of-pocket expenses, such as meals on your own, optional excursions, liturgical offerings, souvenirs, and tips and gratuities would not be included. The OCMC encourages team members to conduct fundraising campaigns through personal contact and letter-writing, and that information will be included in the mission team information packet that is sent to each team member after their application is accepted. Usually mission teams come from all over the country and attend orientation at the OCMC in St. Augustine, Florida, before leaving on their mission. Our group, since we will all be flying out from Los Angeles, will attend orientation here at St. Paul's, and then will leave from here. Father Martin and Pres. Renee will come here to conduct orientation for us.

Father Martin also explained to us why Orthodoxy has such appeal in Africa and why the Church is experiencing explosive growth there. First, the African culture is in tune with the aesthetics of Orthodox worship. Incense, candles, and chanting have appealed to the people in Tanzania for the same reasons it appeals to converts in the United States! Second, our church was not involved in colonialism and thus does not suffer from any of the negative fallout from that. Lastly, our teachings and our history as the authentic church from which all other churches derive are appealing as

well. Orthodoxy is spreading throughout East Africa and we will be helping to found a healthy Christ-centered community in Bukoba.

At this point, the Missions Committee is hopeful that many of you will wish to follow in the footsteps of the late Lynette Hoppe and Anthony and Lara Callas and become a member of our Missions Team here at St. Paul's! Please speak with Father Steve or any Missions Committee member about any questions you may have. Remember that in offering to serve Christ in this way, each of us will receive far more in return than what we are giving. Your next step after prayerfully considering this opportunity will be to visit the OCMC website at www.ocmc.org to download the application. Once you have filled it out, give your application to Father Steve, who will review it and include a reference for you. Then he will forward your application to the OCMC who will let you know if you have been accepted and will send you the mission team information packet. Please submit your application to Father Steve in January 2007 as the OCMC wants as much lead time as possible to establish the two teams. Once accepted, the OCMC will want a deposit of \$100 two weeks after selection. 50% of the cost should be raised six weeks prior to departure and the entire amount must be received by the OCMC to make the necessary travel arrangements three weeks prior to departure.

May the Lord bless our endeavors in Bukoba!