

# INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES NEWS & NEEDS

W I N T E R 2 0 1 6



GOPA

## Art Therapy A Respite For Children In War Torn Syria

Crayons and water paints cover tables at an art therapy workshop for Syrian children traumatized by nearly five years of war. Their calm and cheerful voices belie the hardship that they and their families face each day. Among them is Moussa, 9. The young boy was with his father when the car they were riding in was hit by a missile near the Syrian village of Mhardeh. His father died instantly. Moussa escaped with only minor injuries, but suffered major emotional trauma. Moussa and his mother, Faten, are among the many residents of the predominantly Christian village who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder due to repeated attacks in the area.

IOCC and Syria partner, Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development (DERD), the humanitarian arm of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, are providing crisis counseling workshops to Syrian people traumatized by war. The psychological support they receive helps families in need learn how to deal with loss and change their perspective about the future. For the adults, that means guided group discussions, while children find their voice through art and music activities.

Moussa and Faten hadn't left their house since the day of the deadly attack. They ventured out for the first time to attend the crisis counseling workshop and have been feeling better since, for which Faten and her daughter, Maya, 15, are very grateful. "From heaven, my father asked God to send this to us so my little brother could leave the house once again," said his sister.

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FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR

Dear IOCC friends,

There is something about a new year that inspires people to make a fresh start. We zero in on making changes for a better life with a renewed sense of purpose. Some seek out ways to improve their health or finances, while others look for ways to strengthen relationships with family and friends. Whatever you resolve to make better in your life this year, know that your support of IOCC is already making life better for so many in need today and for the next generation.

Across the Middle East and Europe, millions of Syrian refugees are seeking a fresh start from years of war. For those unable to flee their homeland, IOCC is providing displaced parents and their children with trauma counseling to address their emotional needs and help restore their hope for a better future. Your generosity is helping people with disabilities in Ethiopia develop job skills that not only provide income but also newfound independence. And disadvantaged children in Jordan have found a new zest for learning thanks to a major renovation project that has transformed their rundown school into a place of pride and hope.

As IOCC moves forward in 2016, I ask you to join our renewed commitment to help our brothers and sisters in need across the street or across the globe, and to keep compassion alive in our hearts and in our actions.

In Christ,

Constantine M. Triantafilou  
Executive Director & CEO

IOCC FOOD PARCELS REACH  
CHILDREN DISPLACED  
BY UKRAINE CONFLICT

Slavic Heart

Nearly two years of armed conflict has driven 1.5 million Ukrainian people from their homes. UNICEF estimates that 180,000 of those displaced are children. Among the most severely impacted are infants and toddlers, as well as mothers with special needs children. Ukraine's bitter winter only worsens the living conditions for these vulnerable youngsters. IOCC, in cooperation with local partner, Slavic Heart, is distributing emergency food parcels for children under age three living in areas directly affected by the violence in eastern Ukraine.

Kits containing vitamin fortified cereal, food purees, fruit juice, and baby wipes are being directed to vulnerable families in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Families in these two towns near the front line of conflict face hunger daily. Food supplies are dwindling due to damaged roadways and ongoing fighting makes daily forays to grocery markets dangerous.

IOCC is also providing food for young children living in Svyatogirsk, a small town in the Donetsk region sheltering the highest number of displaced families.

International Orthodox Christian Charities, Inc. (IOCC) is the official humanitarian relief agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America and a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy.

*IOCC, in the spirit of Christ's love, offers emergency relief and development programs to those in need worldwide, without discrimination, and strengthens the capacity of the Orthodox Church to so respond.*



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## RESTORED SCHOOL RENEWS JOY OF LEARNING FOR STUDENTS IN JORDAN

High in the hills of northern Jordan, just outside the city of Ajloun, the laughter of children can be heard ringing through the halls of the Orthodox School at Khirbet Al-Wahadneh. Moldy walls have been cleaned and repainted, lighting upgraded, and additional water storage added to rooftops to ensure that there is enough water for students to drink and wash their hands. Through your support, IOCC rehabilitated the school's classrooms and bathroom facilities, and built a playground on a former dirt lot. For the first time since the kindergarten opened in 1989, children have a proper playground.

Headmistress Sahar has a busy job ensuring that the 200 students at her school, ranging from kindergarten to grade six, receive a quality education in a facility that meets their needs. In this area of Jordan, many children cannot afford to get an education at an institution like the Orthodox School. To ensure local children an opportunity to learn and prepare for themselves for the future, the Orthodox School



IOCC

subsidizes tuition for many students in need. That leaves little money for school repairs, resulting in a deteriorating infrastructure.

In an area where needs are great and resources are few, local priest, Father Elia, is thankful for the help of IOCC. "I thank you for your support," he said, as he walked through the playground admiring the new site that brings joy to students at the school.

## 'GIVE FOR GREECE' CAMPAIGN EXTENDS AID TO THOSE MOST VULNERABLE



IOCC/Apostoli

The arrival of freezing cold and snowfall in northern Greece also bring renewed worries to the region's caregiver institutions. More than five years after the onset, Greece's economy remains in crisis. Without government assistance, the state run homes sheltering 1,800 elderly, orphans and disabled struggle to protect the health and well-being of their wards this winter. IOCC is responding to the urgent needs of Greece's most vulnerable with fuel for 34 state institutions in northern Greece to keep their facilities heated through the winter months.

The assistance is made possible through generous support from The Jaharis Family Foundation, Inc., which has pledged to match contributions to IOCC for its efforts to address hunger and poverty in Greece. In addition to the emergency winter aid, ongoing distributions of food and medical supplies are being provided throughout Greece in cooperation with Apostoli, the humanitarian arm of the Church of Greece. Since 2012, IOCC has responded to the country's economic crisis with more than \$22 million in medical support, heating fuel, food, agriculture development, and job assistance programs for the people of Greece.

## GOD WITH US

*“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: behold the virgin shall conceive a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14.)*

Whoever heard of a virgin conceiving a Son! It must be a supernatural phenomenon, so boldly proclaimed by a prophet of the Lord several hundred years before it took place. This prophecy and others of the Old Testament were fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ as He proclaimed in the synagogue:

*“And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:17-21)*

Well! This report in Luke would not have taken place if it were not for the supernatural event of the birth of our Lord from the Virgin Mary.

Back to the former biblical quote. The book of Isaiah was written originally in Hebrew and later translated to other languages. The word Immanuel in Hebrew means “God with us.” It is the name of the Child Jesus that symbolizes His presence with us, His deliverance of His people. One might say His name is Jesus and not Immanuel, therefore, the prophecy was unfulfilled. However, we need to keep in mind that the outcome of the birth of Jesus has caused and will always cause people to recognize that He is indeed Immanuel, God with us. God has always been with us but never before so openly and never before incarnate in the flesh. Let us capture this opportunity to declare all together that Christ is born and to affirm that He is our King, God, and Savior. Let us also beseech Him so that he may continue to bless us and keep us as one community enjoying peace, spiritual progress, and unity.

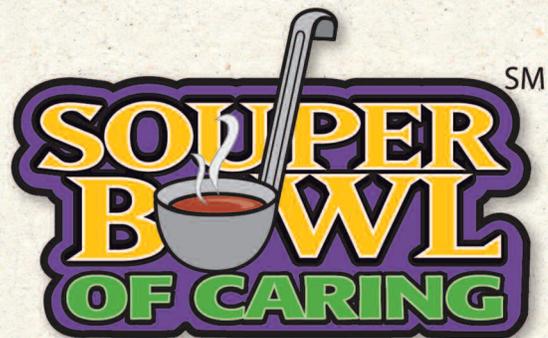
Bishop Nicholas  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

### Volunteer for an IOCC Orthodox Action Team

Join the over 700 volunteers who have already helped rebuild homes and lives across the US.

Sign up to participate on an IOCC Orthodox Action Team. Become God’s hands in service to your fellow man.

[iocc.org/actionteam](http://iocc.org/actionteam)



[iocc.org/souperbowl](http://iocc.org/souperbowl)  
Sunday, Feb. 7, 2016