



PRAYER JOURNAL

Reaching Around the World with Christ's Love





Above: IOCC's health work in Gaza includes nutrition education and hygiene supplies.

Cover: In Syria, IOCC supports family-friendly spaces and provides emotional support to help children, their caregivers, and others cope with the trauma of conflict.

Let's Serve and Pray Together

The Orthodox Church teaches that every single person carries the image of God. So no matter who someone is or what kind of help they need (food, water, someone to listen, etc.), we offer it because God loves people, whom He made in His image—and because He asks us to help one another.

The stories in this booklet show a few ways we can sow “seeds of hope” by helping people around the world through IOCC. In St. Paul’s Second Letter to the Corinthians (next page), we read that our generosity to others glorifies God. As you use this booklet, please pray for the people in the stories and those helping them by doing humanitarian work every day.

Each chapter ends with activities you can do with your family or Sunday School class to think a bit more about how God works through us as we help others.

Thank you for your prayers—they connect us all in service to Christ.



Youth in the US assemble health kits for IOCC's kit program. Learn how to make health kits, school kits, and cleanup buckets for IOCC at iocc.org/kits.

Helping Others Build a Brighter Future



Sowing Seeds of Hope

2 Corinthians 9:10-15

He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.

Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that He has given you.

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!



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.



He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. —2 Cor 9:10

What are some of the best ways to help others? What is the difference between feeding a person and teaching them how to provide their own food? Have you ever had a person guide or mentor you as you learned something new? What kind of things should we be teaching new generations of young people?

In his letter of 2 Corinthians, St. Paul reminds us that in order to be good (or righteous) we should not only give food to people in need, but we should also give them seeds to sow. This tells us there is more to building a future than just providing food and seeds though. In this passage, we are inspired to find ways to help others create the life they envision for themselves. Helping others build a brighter future is a big part of IOCC's work around the globe. Whether it is educating people in need with job skills for the future or teaching young women how to sew so they can earn a living, we are called by Christ to perform charity not just by giving people things but also by equipping them to build a better life.

SYRIA



In Syria, IOCC conducted a workshop to help train and give jobs to women so they could earn income preparing, processing, and selling food, including jams.

Helping Families Thrive



When conflict came to Nour's village outside Damascus, Syria, she and many others left to stay safe. Now they are coming back to slowly rebuild. IOCC supported a workshop to help Nour and other women learn to make and sell traditional food so they could earn a living

“Working here has helped me regain my life after the harsh experience of displacement,” said Nour. “I can now support my family and afford medication for my parents, who are both ill. I have also gained a great deal of experience in food processing.”

IOCC partner St. Ephrem Patriarchal Development Committee set up the workshop. Later, IOCC helped make it bigger by adding equipment like a refrigerator and freezers. Now the women can make, store, and sell more types of foods, including dairy products like traditional cheese and labneh. IOCC also helped make the workshop's outdoor area into a cafeteria where visitors can enjoy food made there. Now 25 women work there and sell their products around the village and nearby. For Nour and her neighbors, this workshop is a sign of hope for a brighter tomorrow.

GREECE



Photo: IOCC/Eirimi Vourtoumis

Beekeeping is a traditional way to earn income in Greece, and several beekeepers are growing their production and income with equipment and business mentoring through IOCC.

Helping Small Businesses Grow



“Everything I've accomplished, I managed on my own,” said Theodora, a beekeeper in Greece. “I took my father's few beehives and created a small healthy business. At this point, I cannot experiment and risk aimlessly.”

Theodora and many others have received support through IOCC to grow their small businesses. IOCC provides equipment and, through local partner KEMEL, business mentoring—where people who have experience managing businesses help others learn these skills. This mentoring is popular with people like Theodora in the IOCC program. “I need experienced guidance,” she said. “Mentoring can help me go to the next level with little risk.”

Another beekeeping business that received equipment through IOCC shows how much impact this program is having. In 2021, this traditional Greek honey producer won the Platinum Award for two honey products in the International Mediterranean Taste Awards. IOCC is expanding programs like this to serve small-business owners who lost buildings and equipment in recent fires as they rebuild. By offering great teachers and mentors, IOCC is helping small Greek businesses level up their success, grow their income, and build for the future.

BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA



IOCC has supported occupational therapy and training in handcrafts for women and girls with disabilities.

JORDAN



In Jordan's Azraq Camp, IOCC has organized activities like soccer for children with special needs, so they have a fun way to be part of their community.

Creating Opportunity



Sometimes small things can make a big difference—whether for one person or for many. That's true in the country of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where IOCC recently helped local partners reach more people in need by giving supplies to a home for women and girls with disabilities.

This home provides occupational therapy for people who live there. Occupational therapy helps people with disabilities and special needs gain important life skills so they can become more independent. Handcrafting is one of the things they learn, so IOCC delivered embroidery and knitting materials, decoupage materials, good-quality fabric, and two sewing machines to the home—small things but valuable in learning handcrafting skills.

With this equipment and their training, the women created beautiful pieces that they could sell for extra income. The IOCC program also supported two craft fairs where these handmade goods were shown off and sold. The support of IOCC and its partner helped share love and learning with people in need as they began earning a living.

Making a Space for Play



In Jordan, IOCC helps people who have impairments or disabilities by providing health services like vision and hearing screening. IOCC also helps them get more involved in community life.

As part of IOCC's work supporting people with disabilities in Jordan, we recently completed the first of multiple planned activities with La Liga Foundation in Azraq Camp. Through its years-long presence in Azraq, IOCC has focused on helping people with visual and hearing problems get the diagnoses and care that they need.

This new program gets children with disabilities more involved in recreation in the camp, like soccer. Especially during the pandemic, fun activities like these have been limited—but they are so important for mental and physical health, especially for children.

IOCC is helping children with special needs feel more at home in the camp community and providing a safe, fun way for them to play and connect with others.

Activities

GRADES 3-5



THANK A TEACHER

It is important to practice gratitude and express thankfulness to the people who help make our own futures brighter. Think of some important teachers in your life. At school, in your parish, in your family, or at home, who has taught you something that made your life better?

In this activity, write a thank-you card to a teacher. In it, be specific about what they taught you and why you are thankful. Drop the card in the mail, or deliver it in person. You might be surprised how much it will mean to them to know they made a difference in your life!

TEACH A FRIEND A SKILL

What is something you are good at doing? Maybe it is playing a sport, making music, speaking another language, cooking a meal, or using a program on a computer or mobile device. Think of a friend or family member who might want to learn how to do this.

Set up a time to teach this skill to your friend. When you teach, set up a goal for your friend to meet and then help them reach it. After you help your friend, talk to a family member or a teacher about how you feel (or write it down in a journal). What is it like serving as a teacher? How did you help make someone's future brighter by taking the time to work with them?

I'm praying for _____

I thank God for _____

Activities

GRADES 6-8

MENTOR SOMEONE YOUNGER

When someone acts as a mentor, they take the time to share their knowledge with a person less experienced than themselves. In many jobs, for example, mentoring is an excellent way to help new workers learn what they should do each day. In life, having a mentor helps people make good decisions, feel supported, and focus on what is most important.

For this activity, think of someone in your life who is younger than you. Find two or three opportunities to mentor them. You can mentor them by listening to their problems, giving advice, and showing that you care about them. You could mentor someone in your family, in your neighborhood, in your parish, or even find an opportunity through your school. As you mentor them, think about how it feels to help another person in this way. And think about how you are "supplying seeds to the sower" by giving your friend advice that will help them in the future.



I'm praying for _____

I thank God for _____

Sharing Your Generous Gifts

LEARN TO MAKE A PRAYER ROPE

The Orthodox prayer rope (also called *komboskini*, *bojanica*, *chotki*, and other names) is a beautiful tool from our faith that helps us pray. If you do not know much about prayer ropes, talk to someone in your family, a parish leader like your priest, youth director, or religious education teacher, or do some research online.

A prayer rope has special knots that can be used to help us count off as we say the Jesus Prayer:

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

There are many videos on the internet teaching us how to make prayer ropes. Do a quick search and find a video you like (one of the best is posted by IOCC’s sister agency Orthodox Christian Fellowship). Use this video to teach yourself how to tie a prayer rope knot. If you can do it, try making a bracelet of 33 knots, one knot for each year of Jesus’s life.



As you are learning this skill, reflect on some of the stories in this chapter. What is it like learning how to make something new? What are the challenges you face as you try to tie the knots? What might it be like for people who IOCC helps as they learn new job and life skills? When you finish your knot or your rope, consider teaching a friend how to make one of their own, and move from being a student to being a teacher!

I'm praying for _____

I thank God for _____



*You will be enriched in every way
for your great generosity, which will produce
thanksgiving to God through us. —2 Cor 9:11*

How does being generous to others show God that we are thankful? What does God call us to do when it comes to helping people around us? When has someone shown you generosity? How did it make you feel? When you are giving to others, how are you “enriched” like St. Paul says in this verse?

The stories in this chapter focus on generosity and sharing as a way to honor God. We are reminded that, in some places, the ability to worship is not guaranteed. Events like war, health crises, and lack of food make it hard for people to pray and honor the Lord. However, when we pull together and show generosity and love toward those in need, we can help them meet their needs and make their lives better. This is how generosity shows our thanksgiving to God. Through our actions, we show that we are thankful for what we have and that we are willing to help those in trouble. All of this honors Christ. And when we take care of each other, we are taking care of God’s creations and showing our thanks for the world He made.



IOCC worked with dioceses in Ukraine to give out food parcels—Easter “baskets”—during Orthodox Holy Week to people who’d left home because of conflict.



A new central sanitary block ensures that students at this rural Ugandan boarding school have a safe and clean learning environment.

“Baskets” Full of Hope



“We were presented with a wonderful Easter basket from your organization. It was unexpected...I want to thank you for such a wonderful gift for Easter!”

These words above are from Ana (not her real name), a Ukrainian student who lost her home during the conflict when she and her family left to find safety. They couldn’t make Easter baskets as they usually do, and they thought they’d need to skip the tradition of taking a basket of food to church for a blessing.

During Holy Week, IOCC worked with Orthodox parishes in Ukraine to give food packages to families moving away from danger. The bags contained a small Easter cake, eggs, sausage, cheese, and a bottle of sunflower oil—to provide basic food and a glimmer of hope. Thousands of displaced families in Ukraine received the packages as they marked the feast of Christ’s Resurrection during an extremely difficult time.

IOCC’s work in Ukraine and nearby countries is meeting people’s most basic needs while also supporting their future—serving both refugees and the families and organizations hosting them.

A Healthy Place to Learn

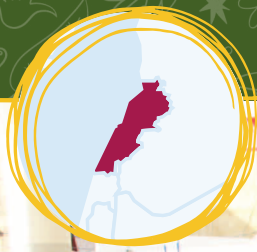


Since 2014, IOCC has worked with the Uganda Orthodox Church (UOC) to improve access to education in rural Uganda.

Recent work took place in partnership with the UOC and the St. Nektarios Education Fund at St. Michael the Archangel Secondary School in Gulu, a boarding school.

After IOCC found that school sanitary facilities (like restrooms and showers) were not safe for staff and students to use, work began to build a new sanitary block. Today, this building has been completed, helping protect the health of the 170 students who live and study at the school.

Being able to wash and stay clean is an important way to remain healthy. Diseases caused by poor sanitation can lead to sickness and even death in Uganda. Now students at St. Michael can learn and pursue their dreams in a healthier environment.



In Lebanon, Hanneh (left) received basic food items from IOCC so she and her family would have enough to eat.



Ahmed gives the thumbs-up during a height and weight check, part of IOCC's work to fight malnutrition in Gaza.

Help and Hope amid Crisis



Lebanon is a small country with many serious problems, including extremely high prices for food and damage from a terrible explosion that destroyed parts of the capital city and many homes and businesses. IOCC is helping people in Lebanon get the basics they need at this difficult time.

Hanneh and Michel are a married couple who together earn less than \$40 a month. They both work hard to support their family, including caring for Hanneh's brother, who has a disability and cannot work.

When jobs don't pay enough, families have to choose whether they will buy food, pay rent or electricity, or buy the medicine they need. To help, IOCC gives away emergency boxes full of food like lentils, rice, and cooking oil so that families can keep food on their tables.

With this food from IOCC, Hanneh and Michel don't have to worry about their next meal and can spend the money they earn on other needs—making life just a little bit better in spite of many difficulties.

The Strength to Play



"Ahmed was always tired," his father said. "He had no appetite...and rarely wanted to play with kids." Ahmed, age 5, had malnutrition, which is common in Gaza, especially for small children.

For years, an IOCC program has been helping with this problem by screening kids and teaching parents and caregivers about malnutrition. "I got excited when the kindergarten director phoned to tell us about a free health screening from IOCC," Ahmed's father told staff.

After screening, Ahmed and his little sister were diagnosed and treated for anemia and other problems caused by not getting enough food. They received supplements, extra-hearty meals, and checkups.

Now Ahmed is stronger and has more energy, and his parents cook differently so that both children will stay healthy. Ahmed's father said that the IOCC program is having a "great impact on building a healthy community."

Activities

GRADES 3-5

LEARN A HYMN

One way to share our gifts is to offer our prayers by singing hymns with others. One of the oldest and most beautiful hymns in the Orthodox faith is “O Gladsome Light.” This hymn is over 1,500 years old, and it is still used today in our parishes. This song is sung during the Vespers service, but it is also a common prayer used when lighting candles or even before meals. Here is the English version:

O Gladsome Light of the holy glory of the Immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ. Now we have come to the setting of the sun and behold the light of evening. We praise God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For it is right at all times to worship You with voices of praise, O Son of God and Giver of Life; therefore all the world glorifies You.

You can hear others sing this hymn by watching many videos online—for example, check the sites of choir groups and archdiocese websites. You may also be able to find someone in an Orthodox parish who would teach it to you or even to your whole religious education class. Once you learn it, light a candle in prayer at home or at church and sing the hymn to God. Think about how this hymn has survived for so long because generations of Orthodox Christians learn it and teach it to one another as a way to offer praise to God.



I'm praying for _____

I thank God for _____

Activities

GRADES 6-8

VOLUNTEER AT CHURCH

Sometimes IOCC helps parishes serve people in need. And we can help, too. It is important for us to learn about serving parishes, even at a young age, so we can see everything it takes to keep them running.

For this challenge, find a way to volunteer at an Orthodox parish during the year. This type of service can take many forms. Here are some ideas:

- Join the choir or chanters during Divine Liturgy.
- Help set up and clean up for a service.
- Bring food to a parish function or coffee hour.
- Talk to your priest and see if any families need supplies, and gather donations.
- Welcome and greet people as they arrive for a service.

Be sure to get the help of a teacher, parent, or other adult when you set these up. Afterward, talk to this person about how it felt to share your gifts with your parish. Say (1) what you noticed, (2) what surprised you, and (3) what you learned. After this, think of ways you can help your parish in the future with your time and talents.



I'm praying for _____

I thank God for _____

Meeting Basic Needs

BRING A FRIEND TO CHURCH

One gift we may not initially think to share is that of our faith. For this challenge, ask a friend to join you as you attend an Orthodox Church service. Be sure to go over details about when they should join you, how we behave in church, and what they should expect. When they attend the service with you, help to make them feel welcome and, if you can, introduce them to people in the community.

Afterward, plan for some time where your friend can ask you questions. If they have questions you cannot answer, that is OK, too. Just write them down and ask your family, priest, or religious education teacher, or search for more information on an Orthodox website. Later, follow up with your friend and share what you learned. Finally, think about what it was like to share the gift of faith with a friend and what doing this means for Orthodox Christians.

PLAN AN OUTDOOR SERVICE

Some of the stories in this chapter focus on helping communities and parishes worship God. For this activity, work with your local parish to organize an outdoor Vespers service.

A Vespers service occurs at the end of the day and is a beautiful part of our Orthodox tradition. Talk to your priest, youth workers, family, or religious education teachers, and select a day and location to hold an outdoor service where a group of Christians can come together to pray the Vespers service. If you can, get other youth involved; together you can read or even sing portions of the Vespers.

Advertise the location and time to your community. You could do this through a flyer, a parish newsletter, or social media. Work with your priest to make a list of what needs to be brought to the site (for example, a Holy Gospel, incense, and icons). As you take part in the service, think about what it would be like to worship in a place where there is no church building or no regular place to practice your faith. Afterward, reflect on what it takes to help people get together in worship. Who does this work at your parish? What would it be like if you lived in a place where it was hard for people to gather for prayer?



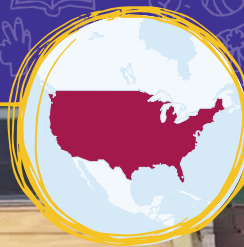
For the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ... —2 Cor 9:12-13a

What are people's most basic needs? What is the difference between wants and needs? How are your own needs met? Where are some places, both nearby and far away, where people may not have everything they need? How does God call on us to make sure others are taken care of? How can we set an example of giving by providing for our friends and neighbors?

The stories in this chapter talk about crises in different countries. Whether it is because of natural disasters like wildfires or drought, or a human problem like war, or complicated issues like homelessness, things happen every day that leave people needing help. St. Paul reminds us that we should supply the needs of the Lord's people, and do this in obedience and thanksgiving to God. This is how we can live a life like Christ, who gave everything he had to help all humankind. As Christians, we should be on the lookout for people who need our help, and offer it freely. IOCC's work provides some examples of what it means to meet people's most basic needs—like food, shelter, and help rebuilding their lives.



Ioannis, an animal farmer in Evia, Greece, received feed from IOCC for his sheep and goats, after he lost his own feed in destructive fires.



James relaxes on a porch built by IOCC volunteers in Florida who repaired his home after Hurricane Irma badly damaged it.

Help for Farmers after the Fires



"It's God's gift to my farm and my family," said Ioannis, a farmer in Evia, Greece, who survived last summer's fires there. He received a gift of animal feed for his farm as part of IOCC's response. "I had no idea how I'd be able to feed my goats and sheep," he said.

IOCC has helped Ioannis and many others in villages where the fires destroyed homes, farms, and businesses. Farmers who raise animals lost their stored feed, stables, and even livestock in the fires. Plus, the conflict in Ukraine has made grain more expensive in Greece, and it is harder to buy food for the animals.

Since the terrible fires hit Greece in the summer of 2021, IOCC has been working to meet the needs of those who lost homes and businesses. IOCC not only provides things like the grain and feed that Ioannis received, but it also gives hygiene supplies, food, and household basics to those in need. In addition, IOCC has supplied new equipment to small businesses that lost everything in the fires. All of this is helping businesses and farming families in Greece as they rebuild over time.

Helping Our Neighbors at Home



When disaster strikes, neighborhoods often need years to get back to normal. That was the case for James and Mary, who built their first home in Nassau County, Florida, in 1957. When Hurricane Irma hit in 2017, it damaged their beloved home badly.

After the 2017 hurricane, James and Mary (not their real names) couldn't repair their home right away because of costs. They faced years of leaking and other problems.

IOCC's US team stepped in to help them with a new roof, a porch, and a ramp to make it easier to enter their home. Through this support, James and Mary, who celebrated 70 years of marriage in 2021, once again have a safe and livable home in their community.

It is important to remember that help is needed not just in far-off countries but also in the United States. IOCC works both near and far when people like James and Mary need a helping hand after disaster strikes.



A mother and her child receive emergency supplies of food in Ethiopia. This is one way IOCC helps communities cope with challenges to their food supplies and livelihoods.

When Food Is Hard to Find



Ethiopia is having a drought: for four years, there hasn't been enough rain to grow food. On top of this, there is conflict in some areas, swarms of desert locusts destroyed crops, and the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Crops have failed, many farmers' animals have died, and people have been forced to leave home to find food, but an IOCC program has helped eight communities get through this hard time. IOCC provided emergency food for young children, pregnant women, and nursing mothers. Health workers also learned from IOCC to screen people for malnutrition and safely prepare and give out emergency supplies of food. IOCC helped hundreds of people affected by the desert locusts by providing money so they could buy the food they needed, when they needed it. The program especially provided aid to women-headed households, people with disabilities, and the elderly because many of them were already struggling before the locusts destroyed their crops. IOCC is helping farmers get supplies for their next planting, plus the food they need right now—and working with communities to find long-term solutions.

Activities

GRADES 3-5

FIX SOMETHING BROKEN



Find something around your house that needs to be fixed. Working with an adult in your family, ask about something simple that you can help repair or clean up. Once you have found a job, think first about what you already know about the job and then about what you need to know to do the job. For example, if your family needs to replace light bulbs in a room, first talk about what you already know about how bulbs work, and then think about what you will need to know so you can choose the right replacement and safely change the bulb.

When you finish, talk about what you learned. How did you fix something that was broken? How else can you find ways to meet your family's needs in your own house?



IOCC has given essentials like new windows to rural schools in Kosovo, so children have a more comfortable learning environment.

I'm praying for _____

I thank God for _____

Activities

GRADES 3-5

SEND A CARE BASKET

This chapter includes stories about how IOCC gives food and care baskets to people in need in different parts of the world. In this activity, you can find a way to make a difference in your own neighborhood and community.

Work with an adult to gather items for a care basket to help someone in your town. You may want to talk to your priest about local shelters, assisted living facilities, or other groups the parish supports. When you make a care basket, think about what items will mean the most to the people receiving it. In this activity try to include:

- Something made by you: a card, some art, a picture, or a craft that shows the person you care.
- Something edible: donated, purchased, or homemade food that helps feed their bodies as well as their souls.
- Something comforting: a blanket, clothes, socks, or something that makes the person's everyday life nicer or less harsh.
- Something prayerful: an icon, a palm cross, a prayer, or anything that reminds them of God's love for them.



Deliver your basket, and then talk with your priest, parents, or another adult who helped you. How did it feel to make this care package? How did it feel to give it away? How is this work answering God's call to take care of other people?

I'm praying for _____

I thank God for _____

Activities

GRADES 6-8

RESEARCH NEEDS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

If we want to make a difference in our world, country, town, or even our household, it is important to learn how to identify where we can make the biggest impact with our work. Before we decide to volunteer or share our gifts, it is important that we find out what the real needs are. This way, we make sure that what we do or give will be an effective way to help.

Take some time to learn about your community—this can be your city or town, neighborhood, school, or parish. As you research, find out what people are in need and what sort of help you can give. Some great ways to do this are:

- Talk to adults and learn about some local charities or groups near you.
- Contact local food banks and shelters.
- Speak with people working in schools and churches who know the community well.
- Search on the internet or social media for local volunteer organizations.

Once you find an organization that is helping people in your area, with a parent or teacher, write an email and ask about the needs of people in the community. Once they respond to you, work with an adult to come up with ways you could share your own gifts to provide for people in need.

I'm praying for _____

I thank God for _____

Supporting the Health and Hearts of Others

ORGANIZE A DONATION DRIVE

As we saw in this chapter, IOCC works with families to help meet their basic needs. Whether it is rebuilding homes after a disaster or providing food and other supplies in an emergency, there are many ways we can show God’s love by helping people get what they need to be warm, safe, and comfortable.

For this activity, work with your parish, a class, or your family to organize a donation drive. There are many types of drives that are popular in local areas.

- Backpack drive for students
- Clothing drive for local charities
- Bedding and blanket drive for local shelters
- Food drive for local food banks
- Emergency kit drive for IOCC (iocc.org/kits)

You will need to research groups in your area that accept donations. Do this by talking to people in your school, neighborhood, or parish, or with a quick online search. Contact the group so you understand any requirements for donating materials to them, and learn about specific needs that you can help them meet.

Once you select a group and type of donation, get the word out via posters, social media, or other announcements. Let people know where to drop off donations, where they will be going, and how the donated materials will be used.

When you collect the donations, be sure to thank those who give, and as you pack them up and deliver them, think about how these materials will help meet the needs of others.

I'm praying for _____

I thank God for _____



... And by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that He has given you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! —2 Cor 9:13b-15

What does it take to be a healthy person? What is the difference between mental health and physical health? Who has helped teach you to be healthy? How does watching our own health honor God? How can we work together to have more healthy communities?

This chapter focuses on IOCC’s work supporting health across different continents. Christ asks us to take care of others, and part of this is helping them live healthy lives. In some cases, this takes the form of sharing knowledge, as in Ethiopia, where IOCC helps people understand and prevent disease. In other cases, IOCC provides health services to people after a tragedy. In Bulgaria, IOCC helped high school students learn how important mental wellness is. When we help people stay healthy, we are truly honoring one of God’s most indescribable gifts: the life He has blessed us with.



IOCC helped repair this clinic near Beirut's port, and now it is back to providing basic medical care for people in need at little or no cost.

Supporting Better Health



Suzanne is 34 and lives in a neighborhood badly hit by the Beirut explosion. She is one of many people in Lebanon who cannot afford to visit the doctor. IOCC repaired a health clinic nearby that offers medical care for free or for very little money.

After the repaired clinic reopened, IOCC partnered with UNICEF to support essential services there. Through this program, Suzanne, who was pregnant, visited doctors each month for checkups as her baby grew. Then, once the baby was born in the clinic, Suzanne visited IOCC's specialist to learn the best ways to feed her little one, and the baby received checkups. All these services were free of charge.

"I was worried," Suzanne said, "and didn't know where to go or how to seek care in this catastrophic situation ... and now I can do it easily with the support and education that I am receiving."

This IOCC program is helping people get the care they need in a difficult time. For Suzanne, IOCC's help meant a healthy start for her child and an opportunity to protect her own health.



IOCC programs in Ethiopia give schoolchildren like Netuh the resources to fight disease in their communities.

Youth Shaping Healthy Communities



Netuh is an eighth grader living in rural Ethiopia. She has always wondered why some members of her community get swollen legs and feet and often have pain and fevers.

When an IOCC project came to her community, Netuh learned that these symptoms are caused by podoconiosis, a disease that comes from walking barefoot on the soil in her area.

Now that she's learned through the project how to treat and prevent "podo," Netuh has joined the IOCC-initiated Stop NTD (Neglected Tropical Disease) club at her school to help fight podo across her community. With trained teachers and other members of the Stop NTD club, Netuh now educates her school community on disease prevention and how to help their relatives who still have podo. She is freely sharing the knowledge she received from the project and making an even bigger impact.

Projects like this one, which get whole communities involved, last even after IOCC's work is done, as they create better health for neighborhoods over the long term. They equip people, including young people like Netuh, to become changemakers in their communities.

BULGARIA



Историята на Емелия започва през 2017 г. През 2001 г. тя започва да пише със своите приятели група. През 2017 г. тя участва в конкурса „Където започва“, който започва с участието на Елена Тодорова, чия заедно със своите приятели формират групата IVA. Участвала в осмия сезон на Гласът на Русия, където също достига до осминафиналите. През 2020 година IVA издава дебютния си албум Beautiful Madness, ко-продуциран от ВНР.



IOCC supported mental health workshops for young people in Sofia, Bulgaria, addressing self-esteem, substance abuse, and addiction.

Helping Youth Find Their Way



“The workshop helped me understand that everyone has their internal difficulties and that I am not alone in this,” said Emiliya. She’s one of over 80 young people who attended an IOCC-supported wellness workshop in Sofia, Bulgaria.

The workshop was one in a series organized by IOCC’s partner the Pokrov Foundation on issues like low self-esteem, negative emotions, substance abuse and addiction, and eating disorders. With IOCC support, the Pokrov Foundation worked with psychologists to provide the sessions for high school students. At each event, a public figure like a singer or an actor shared a personal story about overcoming a mental health issue. These stories started conversations, and afterward, the students shared how much this helped them.

“The workshop helped me think about a positive solution for my own situation,” said Boris.

“[This was a] very useful, motivating, and inspiring experience,” said Daniel. “I was filled with positive emotions. Thank you!” This program shows how IOCC is helping people shape their futures so that they can live productive, healthy lives—both physically and mentally.

Activities

GRADES 3-5

KEEPING YOUR FAMILY HEALTHY

One of the ways we can share our gifts with others and show them God’s love is to help keep one another healthy and safe. In this chapter, you learned how IOCC does this work all over the world, supporting the health of communities and neighborhoods through programs, donations, and teamwork.

Think of your own family as a community. For this challenge, come up with a way to help improve your own health and that of those around you. Think about the things that lead to good health, like eating a balanced diet, finding time for exercise and movement, getting plenty of sleep, and spending time outdoors.

Work with an adult relative to set a two-week goal for your family. Be sure your goal is specific and easy to do daily. Track whether your family meets the goal each day for two weeks. Afterward, talk as a family about how you all feel. This activity can help you and your loved ones be good stewards of your health, together.



Having a safe, reliable water source like this well in Ethiopia is an important way to help communities stay healthy.

I’m praying for _____

I thank God for _____

Activities

GRADES 3-5

MAKE A HEALTH PSA POSTER

Public service announcements (PSAs) are used by all sorts of groups to inform people about important issues or to influence how they act, in order to help them make their lives better. You can make an impact in the lives of others by creating your own PSA poster or flyer and posting it in your school, parish, or another place where people may benefit from the information.



To create a PSA, first think of something important that people should know about or do. This chapter's stories focus on IOCC's work to improve community health, so consider some healthful habits that others should remember—things like frequent handwashing, getting regular exercise, or throwing away litter. Before you make your poster, talk to an adult about your idea and get feedback to make it even better. Think about who the main audience is for your poster and consider how you can grab their attention to communicate your message clearly. Sketch out a rough draft on paper before you start.

Once you have a plan, use arts and crafts supplies to make your poster. Include a simple message, some pictures, and information on where people can go to learn more—like a website, a doctor, or the library. Alternatively, you can make your poster using a digital program and print it out. When it is all done, put your PSA poster up in a place where people can see it. Think about how this information will help support others' health, and then think about what you could do in the future to make an even bigger difference.

I'm praying for _____

I thank God for _____

Activities

GRADES 6-8

MAKE A HEALTHY SNACK

One of the most basic ways to support the health of others is to cook for them. Even if you do not have much experience in the kitchen, there are many easy ways to prepare nutritious and tasty food to show others you care about them and their health.

For this activity, make a batch of simple and healthy snacks to give to friends, family, or people in need. These can be snacks for sports teams after a game, for school friends when you get together to study or hang out, for your family on a weekend, or for people at church after a service.

Search to find your own healthy recipe or ask an adult for help making a family favorite. Whatever you make, think about healthy portion sizes, serving fresh ingredients, and easy prep and cleanup. Here's one snack you can make at home.

Colorful Fruit Skewers (10 servings)

Ingredients

- 2 bananas, sliced
- 2 oranges, sliced
- 2-3 kiwis, sliced
- Precut pineapple chunks
- 20 red grapes

Directions

- Cut all fruit into about one-inch pieces.
- Get 10 wooden skewers and put a piece of each fruit on the skewer.
- Arrange in any color pattern you want.
- Chill and serve.

After you make your snack, serve it to people you care about and think about how you've provided a service that supported their health. Think of other ways you could use food to make the lives of people around you better.

Activities

GRADES 6-8

COOKIE SALE

While making food for others is one way to show we care, selling food as a fundraiser is a great way to raise awareness and help important causes. For this challenge, choose a charity or organization you would like to support. It can be a local group, a national organization, or even IOCC! Making sure you have an adult’s permission before you start, work on your own or with a group of friends to bake several batches of cookies. You can make them from scratch or find ready-made dough for sale at the grocery store.

After you’ve baked them, pack the cookies up in small bags. With the bags, include a short note explaining which charity you’re supporting, why you chose this organization, what it does, and where people can find more information about it. Then go out with an adult and sell these cookies to raise money for your chosen charity.



Whether you go door to door, set up a table in your neighborhood, school, or parish, or get help from friends and family, be sure that you take the time to explain why you are supporting the organization and why it means so much to you.

Afterward, take your profits and send them to your organization. Get help from an adult to write a check or make a gift online. When you donate your cookie sale money, include a short letter to your charity’s staff explaining who you are, why you chose to support them, and what you learned during your fundraiser.

I’m praying for _____

I thank God for _____



Daily Prayers

“Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation for cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, a protection against sadness.” —St. John Chrysostom

When we pray as Orthodox Christians, we can grow closer to God by giving thanks, asking for forgiveness, asking for help, or telling God how much He means to us.

On the following pages are Orthodox daily prayers to help you as you pray each day. While we can always pray on our own, it is helpful for us to also use daily prayer routines passed down through our Church, so we learn how to pray regularly and thoughtfully.

With these prayers, try to find a special time and place that works for you, and start your own prayer routine. After a while, with daily prayer we feel less worried, more happy, more loved, and protected by God—just as St. John Chrysostom tells us.

PRAYER BEFORE MEALS

Christ our God, bless the food, drink,
and fellowship of Your servants,
for You are holy always, now and ever
and unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER MEALS

We give thanks to You, Christ our God, that
You have satisfied us with Your earthly blessings;
deprive us not also of Your Heavenly Kingdom.
As You came to Your disciples and granted
them peace, so come to us and save us, Savior.

HYMN TO THE THEOTOKOS

It is truly meet to bless you, Theotokos,
ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother
of our God. More honorable than the Cherubim,
and more glorious beyond compare than the
Seraphim, without corruption you gave birth to
God the Word. True Theotokos, we magnify you!

LENTEN PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM

Lord and Master of my life, take from me the
spirit of sloth, despair, lust for power, and idle talk.
But give rather the spirit of chastity,
humility, patience, and love to your servant.
Yes, Lord and King, grant me to see my own
transgressions, and not to judge my brother,
for You are blessed, unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE HOURS

You Who at every season and every hour, in Heaven
and on earth are worshipped and glorified,
Christ God, Who are long-suffering, merciful,
and compassionate; Who loves the just and shows
mercy upon the sinner; Who calls all to salvation
through the promise of blessings to come—
Lord, in this hour receive our supplications, and
direct our lives according to Your commandments.

Sanctify our souls. Purify our bodies. Correct our minds;
cleanse our thoughts; and deliver us from
all tribulations, evil, and distress. Surround us with
Your holy angels that, guided and guarded by them,
we may attain to the unity of the faith, and unto
the knowledge of Your unapproachable glory.
For You are blessed unto ages of ages. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SICK

Christ, Who alone are our Defender: Visit and heal
Your suffering servant [Name], delivering him/her
from sickness and grievous pains. Raise him/her
up that he/she may sing to You and praise
You without ceasing, through the prayers of the
Theotokos, You Who alone loves humankind.

PRAYER FOR THOSE IN NEED

Christ, Who alone are our Defender:
Be mindful, Lord, of the young and the old;
orphans and widows; the sick and the suffering,
the sorrowing and the afflicted, all captives,
and the needy poor; upon them all send forth Your
mercies, for You are the Giver of all good things.



The icon of Matthew 25:35 was generously donated to IOCC by iconographer Bessie Zgourides.



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