2020: CROSSROAD pivots ONLINE!
So we invite Christ to hold us together. Then in sheer gratitude we ask Him, “how can I serve?”
Beloved Alums,

We know it’s been a hard year. I’m ready for quarantine to be over—ready for good company, effortless visits, and hugs, so many hugs. I’m ready to hear that those of you who are struggling to find work have found wonderful jobs…and ready to see our parishes across the country busting at the seams with joyful worshippers.

Yet our hard coronavirus reality is spilling into 2021 and it will likely take a very long time for life to resume a new equilibrium. As we face this challenge, there may be no more needful time for us to allow Christ to hold us together—as individuals and as a body of believers. We are earthen vessels, all of us. When we let Christ fill us, He holds us together. Let’s let Him hold us.

Let’s let Him hold us so we can be agents of hope and healing in a suffering world. There has perhaps never been a more important time when the ‘ongoing’ definition of vocation was critical...we have to rethink, in this unusual time, how we are going to love God and neighbor well in our present reality. So we invite Christ to hold us together. Then in sheer gratitude we ask Him, “How can I serve?”

When I’ve asked this in sincerity and prayer, I’ve found the consistent answer is simply, “Buckle up.” He has work for us to do, and it’s the adventure of a lifetime. (Not an easy adventure—but the ones worth going on never are.)

Beloved alums, you have a high calling to be agents of healing and hope. Let Christ hold you together now, so that amidst all the hard of the coronavirus world, you can live into your vocation in your beautiful unique ways. For some of you, this may be some urgently needed service within your town or city. For others, it may be the whole way in which you think about structuring a profession. For others, it may be deep service within a parish context. Whatever it is, explore the incredible wealth of our spiritual and theological heritage, our matrix of discernment, to be led to solutions to today’s complex challenges.

It is an extraordinary privilege to be His servant, doing His work. Its outcome in our own lives is a deep, grounded, steady joy. God is with us! Amidst all this, God is with us.

In His service,

Ann Mitsakos Bezzerides
Ann Mitsakos Bezzerides, Ph.D.
IN THIS ISSUE

A Glimpse into 2020
  6 2020: CrossRoad Moves Online!
  12 Alumni Advisory Board Updates
  14 The Telos Project
  18 Alumni Retreat
  30 CrossRoaders Out on the Road
  34 Alumni & Staff Updates

Alumni Reflections
  16 The One Thing, Paul Murray
  19 Seeing the Person in the Pandemic, Antigone Kraft and Andrew Kithas
  22 Green New World, John and Alexios Touloupis
  24 Hope for the Hopeless, Niko Petrogeorge
  26 Veiled is your Beauty, Alexander Karcher
  27 Artist Feature, Peter Koulouris

Staff Reflections
  3 A Letter to Our Alumni, Dr. Ann Bezzerides
  5 Remedying the Common Distress, Kyra Limberakis
  10 Youth Ministry in Exile, Alex Demos
  11 Greetings from HCHC, George Cantonis
  17 Outward and Upward, Sarah Manuel
  20 Making of the Mosaic, Fr. Turbo Qualls

Stay connected with CrossRoad through our online platforms!

- Website: https://www.crossroadinstitute.org/
- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/crossroadyouth
- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/crossroadovm
- LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4371720/

ABOUT

Down the ROAD

Down the Road is the magazine for the alumni of the CrossRoad Summer Institute, published annually by the Office of Vocation & Ministry at Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology.

EDITING AND PRODUCTION

Kyra Limberakis
CR Director

Ann Bezzerides, Ph.D.
OVM Director

Jenny Haddad Mosher, Ph.D.
Telos Project Director

Cameron Thorp
Layout and Design

Tanya Contos
Line Editor

Office of Vocation & Ministry
50 Goddard Avenue, Brookline, MA 02445
Phone: 617-850-1309
Fax: 617-850-1408
Email: CrossRoad@hchc.edu
As I reflect on 2020 and the loss, hardship, and division it has brought into many of our lives, I want to provide comforting words to you—words that will heal, inspire, bring hope. While no words of mine could possibly address the unique and ongoing struggles each of you may be facing right now, I believe there can be hope and comfort found in the simple and grounding message we all know as CrossRoaders—that our vocation is our unique and ongoing response to Christ’s call to love God with heart, soul, strength and mind and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Navigating our response to this call may never have felt more challenging than during 2020, but I’m grateful we are called to something beyond ourselves, motivated by the never-ending call to love. I’m even more grateful for the guidance on how to love, which Christ models for us, a love so profound that it “trampled down death.” A love that wasn’t afraid to touch the wounds of the sick, weep with those who mourned, show mercy to sinners, liberate the oppressed, and offer a home for the outcasts. This is the type of love our world needs and, as Orthodox Christians, we should be the first to offer it.

To be a healing presence for others, sometimes we do have to take care of ourselves first. We have to put the oxygen mask on ourselves before we can help the person sitting next to us. For me, that has meant gently turning towards Christ in prayer, seeking His wisdom through the Scriptures and our Tradition, leaning on others for guidance and support, and finding moments to be still.

But how do we offer love to others when we ourselves might be the one who is sick, the one in mourning, the one who is oppressed, and the first among sinners?

On times of famine and drought, St. Basil writes something challenging, yet it is exactly what I needed:

“Are you poor? You know someone who is even poorer. You have provisions for only ten days, but someone else has only enough for one day. As a good and generous person, redistribute your surplus to the needy. Do not shrink from giving the little that you have; do not prefer your own benefit to remedying the common distress,” (p. 83).

St. Basil’s homily awakened something in me and pulled me out of my complacency. It reminded me that if I am to truly “love my neighbor as myself” then I need to offer my neighbor what I myself need the most. St. Basil invited me to remember that there will always be someone who is struggling more than I am, that it is my obligation as a Christian to look beyond my own needs, my own bubble, and to alleviate the sufferings of other people in whatever way I can. I don’t say that to diminish anyone’s unique struggles, but to remind myself that my own suffering cannot blind me to the needs of my neighbor. And if 2020 has taught me anything, it’s that our whole world is in deep need of healing, of reconciliation, of compassion, of justice.
CR Online Session 2, in the Sanctification of Creation session.

2020: CROSSROAD

Down the Road I 2021

6
As the world began to shut down in March 2020, CrossRoad faced the foreboding question: would we be able to host our 2020 sessions in person? Would we have to move the program online? How on earth would we adapt an intensive ten-day theological institute to a virtual format? Would high schoolers be so exhausted from Zoom school that they wouldn’t want to attend CrossRoad Online? Leaning into the unknown, we made the difficult decision in the spring to adapt our program to an online format for the high school juniors and seniors who had anticipated attending CrossRoad for months.

After countless discussions re-imagining what an online CrossRoad Summer Institute would look like, hours of preparation to develop rich theological content that could be delivered in an online format, and tremendous love and commitment from our program staff, we launched the first-ever CrossRoad Online Summer Institute—two sessions, ten days, and 43 students from across North America. We took the best of what CrossRoad has to offer and distilled it into six hours of programming each day: with daily services led by priests from across the US, scripture and theology lectures from outstanding professors, small-group discussions for students to dig into the material, and a daily “CR Detour”—time to just hang out and connect with one another.

We had no idea what to expect. But CrossRoad staff and participants exceeded any positive expectation we could have had. Each day, they engaged in thoughtful discussions, shared their hardest questions about the faith, and opened themselves up to connect with peers they had never met before. Our staff prepared interactive sessions on topics like sanctification of...
creation, faith and science, suffering, pop culture and technology—that our participants raved about! The combination of our staff—who were so committed to making sure these young people were seen, heard, and given the best of what the Church has to offer—plus the caliber of students willing to take a chance on CrossRoad Online, was a dynamic unlike any other. Even when programming officially ended each night, most students stayed later to continue conversation, ask questions, chat on Discord, listen to “CrossRoad Radio” and build connections with one another. Despite their online-learning exhaustion, it was clear these young people were yearning for deeper reflection and connection, and CrossRoad Online provided exactly that.

When asked about their experience of CrossRoad Online, what they had learned, and how the remainder of 2020 might look after their time in the program, participants shared:

---

It’s going to be a whole lot better!!! I feel way more equipped for life in general, and I feel ready to integrate the things I’ve learned from CrossRoad into my everyday routine. I am going to try to sanctify every moment I have this summer, and immerse myself in beautiful creation every day!!

—Anonymous, Session 1

It has given me hope! The world looked so bleak, like everything was dying and falling apart. I have learned about my faith and I have something to work towards: doing my best to fulfill my vocation. I’ve met inspiring friends and mentors that I know I can count on when I feel lost.

—Anonymous, Session 2

CrossRoad has now grown the community in which I feel safest. Here my faith has been protected, loved, and nurtured. My hopes of being a better Christian have been strengthened and my dreams for the future seem that much brighter. So thank you, CrossRoad, for giving me those gifts.

—Artemis-Melania Postolos, Session 2

---

2020: CROSSROAD
The participants taught us that the Holy Spirit was truly working to illuminate the Gospel in their hearts and minds. We are so grateful for the opportunity this summer presented us and for the 43 young people who took a courageous chance on CrossRoad Online. Moving online challenged us to figure out how to truly “meet students where they are at” (literally and figuratively!), how to lead them to Christ through any medium, and how to embrace the inevitable ambiguity life presents. Undoubtedly, the lessons we learned from our beloved 2020 CrossRoaders will remain with us as we prepare for summer 2021.
We are all familiar with the adage “hindsight is 20/20.” At the start of 2020, we thought this year would let us look back at the last few decades and see how far we’ve come. But the hindsight it provided was clearer than we could have imagined. What we experienced in 2020 was a modern-day Tower of Babel. Except, instead of dividing the nations, this time we were dispersed to our private homes.

2020 has seen just about everyone’s life take a serious detour. CrossRoad 2020 was no exception. In 2020, with its mission and road to the Cross “clearly” in view, the tables were turned and we as a staff had to figure out how we were going to deliver the same content and provide a comparable experience not only in order to honor the commitment of the youth in our charge, but also to live out our own vocation in Christ.

The staff and the participants were all apprehensive: how would we dig deep without nightly devo? How would we build trust and loosen up without Project Adventure? What would “Night with the Saints” be like on a screen at four in the afternoon? What if people were disengaged completely and decided to stop logging on mid-week? The CrossRoad we knew—that we trained for—was gone.

We said repeatedly amongst ourselves: “I just want my old life back. This isn’t how it should be.” Our youth ministry was driven into exile. The truth is, exile is a major theme in the biblical narrative. The first Bible story ends with the expulsion of humanity from Paradise. The Hebrews spent a forty-year exodus in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land. And, perhaps the most dramatic example: the exile of Israel to Babylon in 586 BC.

Consider the cosmetic similarities between the Babylonian captivity and our own circumstance. The Church gave voice to our unique dejection when at the beginning of the Triodion we chanted the same psalm as the Jews of antiquity:

*By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. Alleluia.*

*We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. Alleluia.*

*How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? Alleluia.*

How was the CrossRoad staff going to sing the Lord’s song in a strange land? This “Zoom-Babylon” is not CrossRoad’s home. It is easy to be despondent and lose hope. But our exile drives us to the ultimate realization: here we are but strangers and sojourners, exiles upon the earth. The apostles understood this perfectly. St. Peter is explicit: “Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul” *(1 Peter 2:11).* St. Paul echoes Peter: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord” *(Philippians 3:20).*

So what I offer you is what I told the CrossRoaders: God wants us to realize our journey is not meaningless, but also that it does not end here. Let us take courage. The exile will not last forever. Christ is in our midst. Soon enough we will all go to our true home. But this year, as we look “Down the Road,” let us walk with faith and assurance that the Way leads out of exile.
Greetings from the Holy Hill!

I hope and pray that all of you are staying safe and well through these challenging times. As I write to you from our beautiful but uncommonly quiet campus, I think back to my first encounter with CrossRoad last summer. It was a joy to meet the participants and see for myself what so many people had told me: CrossRoaders are remarkable young people, full of great energy and ideas, all rooted in strong faith and determination to make a difference in the world as Orthodox Christians.

Who would have thought back then that this summer would be so different, and for such a terrible reason? It must have been disappointing to you 2020 CrossRoad participants not to be able to come to campus, experience HCHC to the fullest, and interact with each other in person. But, thanks to the OVM's ingenuity and hard work—and your own indomitable spirit—you made the most of the reinvented program. You learned together, you worshiped together, you had fun together. And now you are forever part of both the CrossRoad alumni community and the HCHC community.

God bless you all as you continue to discern how best to use your individual gifts in service to the Church and society. Please keep in touch with us as well as with each other. And if you are still pursuing your education, please think about doing so at Hellenic College or Holy Cross. We would love to welcome you back as students at our beloved school.

In Christ,

George M. Cantonis
President
Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ!

This year we’ve been living in uncertain, tragic, and stressful times. Wildfires, pandemic, civil unrest and more have drastically changed the way we live and cast a shadow of fear over the world. How do we, God’s people, confront these trials?

I feel that I came across a useful answer to this question while reading the Gospel of Luke with my Goddaughter a few weeks ago. In Luke 17:5, the apostles say to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” Jesus replies, saying that “…If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.” He then goes on to tell a parable that seems unrelated, telling the apostles that a servant who has worked in his master’s field all day still doesn’t eat and rest until after preparing a meal for his master. Furthermore, that servant is not thanked for carrying out the duty that is expected of him, and the Lord tells the apostles to likewise do all that is commanded of them while thinking, “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).

With this parable Jesus has answered the apostles’ request. Their desire to obtain the power of great faith is good, but it cannot simply be granted in a word; faith is action with a humble and contrite heart. The Lord’s story teaches them that their faith will only be increased through obedience to God’s commands for them and humility. We, too, can increase our faith by doing likewise, enabling us to meet all calamity with the serenity and peace of God.

During 2021, I pray the Alumni Advisory Board (AAB) will be able to continue offering opportunities and resources which help you take actions that increase your faith! We have worked to do so in 2020 by supporting the OVM’s initiatives for alumni connection during the quarantine, such as weekly devos, alumni book clubs, and open mic nights. We’ve also been working hard to prepare a new alumni website that will make it easier to get to alumni information and resources than ever before.

Please do not hesitate to send us your feedback on AAB initiatives or requests for new ones at crossroad@hchc.edu! Our board is always seeking to serve the alumni community in ways that are most relevant and helpful to you!

With humility and love in Christ,

Jason Oneida, 2006
Alumni Advisory Board Chair
**SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE**

The Financial Sustainability Committee started off this past year excited about the opportunities to raise funds for the Sophia Bambalis Scholarship fund. As a committee we designed new CrossRoad keychains to be sold at alumni gatherings. With the shift to virtual gatherings, we are working with the website committee to produce an online store so you can purchase from anywhere!

Looking towards the future, we are planning on designing more items to be sold online and at events.

In addition to the initiatives led by the Alumni Board for sustaining the Bambalis Scholarship fund, this year we were able to raise over $20,000 to support future CrossRoad participants!!

**WEBSITE COMMITTEE**

This newly formed committee came together this year to create a new website for CrossRoad alumni. As a committee we started building an additional website for the alumni community, where we will be providing information about upcoming events, resources to continue learning, and a new CrossRoad merchandise store!

New CR Merch is on the way in 2021 with our new online store!

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

The Education Committee (Dima, Julianna, and Peggy) hosted two CrossRoad Alumni Book Clubs (nicknamed CR ABCs) this year! Fr. Michael Tishel led a discussion on St. John Chrysostom’s homilies, and Dr. Michael Legaspi facilitated a study on the Book of Job. We reviewed our online resources and worked on spreading the word about our initiatives to alumni. We are currently planning on hosting another book club in Spring 2021 as well as adding some new episodes to the CrossRoad Alumni podcast on Ancient Faith Radio!

We are currently planning on hosting another book club in Spring 2021 as well as adding new episodes to the CrossRoad Alumni podcast!

**COMMUNITY BUILDING COMMITTEE**

This year has been a whirlwind of change for all of us. We started off the year with two regional meet-ups—thank you to those who were able to attend. We gathered alumni from two different regions of the country to take part in fellowship (Atlanta and Boston). Due to COVID-19, we then transitioned our focus to a more virtual platform. We reached out to alumni from each session to help create a “Welcome to the Alumni Family” video to help transition this year’s alumni into our family.

Moving forward, the Community Building Committee is working on organizing two distinct online social platforms where alumni around the country can connect personally and professionally. We will also be promoting online social events such as movie nights. *So keep an eye out for upcoming events!*
The Telos Project, a five-year research project run out of HCHC’s Office of Vocation & Ministry and funded by a $1.5 million grant from the Lilly Endowment, will enter its final year of funding in 2021. A sister program to CrossRoad, Telos asks how Orthodox young adults (ages 23–29) engage with their local parishes, and how parishes can support them in their vocation to serve the Church and the world. Our pilot parishes across the country have been getting to know their young adults, building relationships with them that will allow them to understand their real needs and gifts, and designing and piloting new ministries with and for them.

COVID threw our Telos pilot parish teams a serious curveball. How can you get to know young adults, connect them to others in their parish, and engage and support them when churches are closed and in-person gatherings are limited? Telos young adult leaders caught that ball and rewrote their game plans, making it possible for ministry to continue and develop, and pioneering some incredible new models for parish life.

Incorporating useful technology into parish life had already been a feature of many Telos teams’ work, with a number of teams employing their young adult facility with tech to help their parishes implement online giving and digital payment, improve their websites, and stay better connected through social media and apps like Flocknote. But the pandemic shifted the place of technology radically; the ability to do things like stream services was no longer a nice nod to modernity, but a community lifeline—and young adults were ready. In the first months of lockdown, teams moved almost everything they were doing online: planning meetings, dinners, happy hours, Bible studies, book groups, game and movie nights, paraklesis, vespers, akathists, and service projects, all made possible with clever adaptations, supplies sent through the mail, and the genius of online apps. Virtual coffee hours took off with breakout rooms for young adults. Zoom fatigue threatened just as it did elsewhere—and teams adapted to that too, taking care to make their online meetings more engaging and, especially over the summer, looking for creative ways to connect in person but safely whenever possible.

Most inspiring, teams spread their expertise beyond their own young adult ministries to benefit their entire communities. The team at St. Barbara’s in Orange, CT helped their parish completely reinvent their annual festival as a drive-through food fest. Online ordering and curbside check-in and pick-up ran incredibly smoothly due to a sophisticated network of walkie-talkies both outside and in the kitchen. And in the midst of this “Plan B”, they had the foresight to offer festival customers the option to sign up for text alerts on future St. Barbara’s fundraisers. The parish has since used the alert system to sell koulourakia and Greek pastries. And similar projects were taken on across the country via the initiative Telos POP, brainchild of a gathering of Telos and CR alums (see Sophia’s update below).

Here at Telos HQ, we were thrown into our own season of adaptation, moving the annual Telos consultation online with about...
three weeks notice and then facing a summer without face-to-face meetings or the usual level of travel and/or speaking engagements. It was the perfect opportunity to turn inward and reinvent Telos communications. With the research phase of the project drawing to a close, we knew it was past time to get ready to share Telos learning with as many audiences and in as many modes as possible—the question was, how? We hired Marina Dimas and Nick Goussetis as our Telos Communications Fellows for the summer and they were invaluable help, brainstorming with us, surveying team members, testing various systems, and improving and reconfiguring all our communication modalities. The Telos Podcast now has new cover art and is now available beyond Ancient Faith Radio, on Apple Podcasts and Spotify. Our Instagram and Facebook newsfeeds now regularly send out testimonials from Telos team members, updates from teams, research tidbits related to young adult faith and life, and related Church wisdom, powered by an amazing Excel-based repository designed by Nick. Our teams receive a monthly report that shares “truth, tools, and reality” sourced across the project, helping teams learn from one another. And our Telos newsletter, The Teloscope, goes out bimonthly to everyone on the OVM list, sharing project updates and related resources, encouraging OVM supporters everywhere to start thinking about how they can better support and engage young adults in their own parishes. And a newly redesigned website is nearing completion and launch.

In short, it has been a crazy but fruitful year. We are all ready for COVID to be over, but we’ve also witnessed some undeniable examples of how Christ works, undaunted, even in the midst of madness, to love us and His world. Let’s go and do likewise; glory to God!

Sophia Linebaugh, June 2010

Hello CR Fam! What a year, amirite?! It’s been great to stay connected to you all through this wild time of ups and downs. This past year I’ve been able to experience the coolest crossover of my work world with my Church world: Innovation + Youth & YA Ministry. Early on I had the chance to work with the OVM to adapt and apply a Design Thinking process to their work with Telos Gamma, and most recently with Telos POP! Telos POP (Parish Outreach Program) is a growing group of young adults who came together during COVID-19 to assist parishes with new needs or programs that have come from these new times. We’re focusing on empowering YAs by providing resources, coaching, and funding for them to implement any sort of project in their own parish. If you are interested in joining, learning more, or you have an idea for your own parish, drop us a line! It’s been so exciting to see this group grow and can’t wait to see what’s next.

Reflection from Telos Communications Fellow,
Nick Goussetis, June 2014

As I become more entrenched in young adult life, my time with the Telos Project has reassured me that there are many people who care deeply about ministering to our very transient demographic. Interning as a Communications Fellow felt like another step in a natural progression; whether as a Crossroad student or as a Telos member, opportunities to seek vocational guidance will continue to be readily available. The Telos Project has picked up right where the Crossroad program left off, and I continue to be inspired to seek uplifting and positive examples of Orthodoxy in my daily life.”
“We don’t do a lot of things. We do one thing.”

For the last ten years, Fr. Paul Abernathy has been serving in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, ministering to those in need. He has formed relationships with the people of the community, local leaders, the police force, and Orthodox Christians throughout the city, including my family. So, when my summer plans fell through as a result of the pandemic, I reached out to him to see if he had anything I could help with over the summer. A few weeks later, I found myself driving into Pittsburgh every day to work at the Neighborhood Resilience Project.

The Neighborhood Resilience Project (NRP), as Fr. Paul emphasizes, does one thing: trauma-informed community development. In the early days of his ministry in Pittsburgh, Fr. Paul recognized many of the same trauma symptoms in members of the community that he had seen in himself and his Army friends. He had seen combat in Iraq during his time in the military and identified community-level trauma in the people around him. To do trauma-informed community development, NRP uses the lens of this reality, coupled with Orthodox theology of the human person, and works to build up the community around it, “one block at a time.” Their initiatives include a food and clothing drive, a free health center, a Trauma Response Team, housing an Orthodox mission parish, and deep engagement with the community.

As I started my work at NRP, I was given the task of developing and executing a program for six interns who were coming to Pittsburgh from all over the country. Turns out three of those interns were fellow CrossRoad alumni! Together, eight of us young adult Orthodox Christians worked to serve this Orthodox nonprofit established to serve those in need.

Throughout the summer we reflected on this question: How are we called to live out our vocation? The answer was simple, but living it out was harder. We had all served in ministries like Project Mexico, where the family that you serve is right in front of you and the difference that you are making is obvious. You feel like a superhero. But what happens when the tangible results are taken away, when you do not have that feeling of doing something impactful in the world? What if the work we are asked to do is not even directly serving those in need, but facilitating those who are doing the work? Often, our work felt mundane, boring, or inconsequential—we organized closets, hung icons, painted rooms, and reorganized the food and clothing drive. The “I just helped” feelings were absent, the ones some of us were used to or hoped for. This revealed to us a great but important challenge: the challenge of truly serving selflessly, without seeking anything in return, including warm and fuzzy feelings.

As Orthodox Christians though, we know that love and service are not about a feeling; in fact, the moments when we do not feel love are the moments when we reveal whether or not we have it. God calls us to serve others selflessly, with no selfish intentions. So it seems that sometimes, to test our intentions, he takes away the good feelings and the fun of it that may have drawn us there.

While sometimes it felt like we were not doing much, by the end of the summer, we could see a physical difference that we had made, in addition to the groundwork we had laid for an internship and externship program that will, God willing, be a part of the NRP’s ministry for years to come. And we were just the beginning: more interns are there now, led by two CrossRoad alumni, continuing and building upon the work we inherited and made our own.

We did a lot of things this summer, but in the end, we ultimately did one thing: we served God and His people through trauma-informed community development.
At the end of the spring semester, as classes came to a close, I sighed a sense of relief and sadness. On the one hand, a strange and challenging school year full of virtual learning and the unknown was finally over. But on the other hand, I was suddenly facing a long summer far from friends, filled with even more uncertainty. So when an email arrived in my inbox asking if I’d be interested in taking a virtual mini-course on Christian Social Innovation offered by the Office of Vocation & Ministry, I jumped at the chance. Class began on May 7th, and I couldn’t help but get excited with a brand new composition notebook and pen in hand. My high expectations were not disappointed as we dug into juicy articles, listened to the wisdom of our professors, and engaged in small group discussions every week. Rev. Dr. Nicholas Denysenko and Dr. Greg Jones (our professors) always came prepared with beautiful words and ideas, inspiring us to consider how we can make an impact in our parishes and communities both during the COVID-19 era and beyond.

The course took us on an engaging journey exploring the challenges of a coronavirus-shaped world, discovering the importance of character for leadership, uncovering an Orthodox imagination for social innovation, and renewing Christian imagination for the life of the world. The course ended with a challenge for us to consider how we can make an impact in our parishes and communities both during the COVID-19 era and beyond.

As the Liturgy is the work of the people, living out the “Liturgy after the Liturgy” will require our whole community.

As I worked on my project plan, I thought about the fact that our Church is catholic, meaning it’s for all, but we clearly struggle with that reality when it comes to the homeless outside our doors. But part of our fear of the “other” is just our fear of the unknown. What if we started seeing ourselves in others, empathy, by drawing near to a situation we’d been ignoring for years?

I started thinking about what our community could do to eliminate that fear and have the inside of our sanctuary reflect the community outside our church walls? What’s stopping us from using our wonderful hall to have a food pantry or soup kitchen? What if our community used its services as a way to welcome visitors and connect with the “unknown”? While I’m still fleshing out the details of my project, I’ve realized this is not something I can do alone—nor should I. As the Liturgy is the work of the community, growing outward and upward.

My prayer in accomplishing this daunting task starts with words I heard during this remarkable OVM course by the humanitarian Maggy Barankitse: “Lord, let your miracles break forth everyday. And let me not get in the way! Amen.”
On March 13 and 14, 2020, 55 CrossRoad Alumni from nearly every year of the program’s existence met for the annual CrossRoad Alumni Retreat. Out of an abundance of caution with regard to the novel coronavirus, we had quickly shifted gears to move the retreat online. While we deeply missed the fellowship that takes root when we meet in person, we were also grateful for the technology that allowed us to stay connected. Across vast distances, alumni from throughout the country were able to meet and talk together, and we even got to catch up with those who would not have been able to attend the event had it been in person!

CrossRoad Director Kyra Limberakis opened the retreat by speaking about resilience in uncertain times. With the lockdown beginning the weekend of our retreat, she urged alumni to be patient with themselves as they navigate the challenges of quarantine. She reminded everyone that resilience is the capacity to persist in the face of life’s challenges by remembering that we have a greater purpose in Christ (even when we cannot see it!) and using the perspective that, through His death and resurrection, there is something better to come. She concluded by encouraging the alums to think for themselves about what resilience might look like for them in the midst of the present uncertainties.

On day two, we heard from our keynote speaker, Dr. Kathrynn Bocanegra, an Orthodox licensed clinical social worker based in Chicago who currently serves as Senior Advisor to Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul on crime victim and violence prevention issues. Dr. Bocanegra’s talk focused on loving our neighbor and breaking down the walls that separate “us” from “them.” She kept us grounded by reminding us that while our current circumstances have felt far more uncertain than normal, there are many people for whom life is a constant struggle with uncertainty. They live under threat of violence, hunger, and homelessness. Her work in violence prevention has shown her how powerful it can be when people live as models of solidarity and forgiveness—as bloodshed ceases, families are healed, and mothers even forgive their sons’ killers. She shared several stories of her work and encouraged our alums to consider what it means to love our neighbor and break down barriers in a COVID-shaped world.

One of the most popular parts of the online retreat was the breakout discussion groups. People were able to talk about what was truly on their minds and connect. Having the rest of the CrossRoad family there to support one another at the beginning of quarantine provided a major boost to morale, as people opened up about what they were going through, and took turns listening to each other. It helped to have other alumni there to truly listen, and to realize that we are not alone!

In a time when people are increasingly isolated due to COVID-19, the online retreat was a significant effort to create community over a distance.
Entering the field of medicine just a few years ago, we felt that we had an idea of what each disease was and how to treat it. COVID-19 changed the way we look at everything. Now, there is a new disease and no answers.

“Life is not about a title.” We attended CrossRoad in 2007 and 2009, where we were exposed to the idea that life, and what we chose to do with it, is about more than just ourselves. Fast-forward over a decade, and we have both spent most of those years working to get two very specific letters attached to our names. As we’ve gone through our training, the concept of a “vocation” vs. a “career” has occasionally become blended, and the idea of serving others gets hidden behind the dream of hanging a medical school diploma on a wall. The field of medicine is full of titles and ranks, and we continue to strive to achieve the next title, currently both working as residents who are eager to receive the title of attending physician.

Enter 2020. In many ways it has been the longest year of our lives, but in others it has flown by with a velocity that can only be described as relentless. Our worlds were turned upside down, then sideways, contorted like a balloon animal, and tossed into a dumpster fire for good measure. We work at large medical centers in Baltimore and Chicago, and have both felt the overwhelming uncertainty that comes with COVID-19. The confidence we have been building as physicians has been confronted with the stark reality check that is this brand new disease, the “evidence” for treatment has been frighteningly scarce. As such, we have both seen confidence eroding in the faces of our supervisors, colleagues, nurses, and pharmacists, all members of the healthcare team.

In some ways, this pandemic has been a great equalizer. COVID-19 has infected millions of people across the world and killed hundreds of thousands of people in our country, regardless of their title or station. During the high points of the pandemic, patients were isolated in the hospital alone, suffering from a disease they didn’t understand and without their families by their side. Providers worked tirelessly, often unable to see loved ones for months due to work schedules and travel restrictions. As residents, it has been heartbreaking to interact with patients behind masks, gowns, face shields, and gloves. Sometimes, it’s hard to see the presence of God in all of this. We see so much suffering within the walls of the medical centers to begin with, and over the past few months that suffering has been relentless.

As residents, it has been heartbreaking to interact with patients behind masks, gowns, face shields, and gloves...We see so much suffering within the walls of the medical centers to begin with, and over the past few months that suffering has been relentless.

Working in the healthcare system in 2020 has given us the opportunity to witness profound acts of love, in both small and big ways. We have seen providers spend hours at the bedside of patients, calling families around the clock. Researchers are working tirelessly to find treatment. Restaurant owners, who are struggling to keep afloat themselves, have donated food to healthcare workers. Doctors, nurses, medical assistants, and hospital staff have worked overtime for almost a year to take care of others. We see these glimpses of faith and goodness shining through even these darkest of times.

All of this has reminded us that what really matters is not the title we carry or the knowledge we have learned through training, but the person in front of us every time we see a patient. Science will find a way, probably more than one, to treat this disease and tackle what lies ahead. Good medicine, however, takes more. It takes healing, and that requires a person.
Pantocrator in the Cathedral of St. Sava in Belgrade, Serbia.
In the patriarchal cathedral of St. Sava in Belgrade, the world’s largest mosaic is all but complete. This has been hailed as the peak of Christian art. As a priest of the Serbian Church, I take joy in this accomplishment; however, as an African-American Orthodox Christian, I am challenged by what this monumental work says to me about what is yet to be accomplished in the Church. When I see online pictures of this incredible mosaic, I can’t help but see it as a work of devotion and inspired unity, and like any truly Christian work of art, it speaks to me about so much more than the simple aesthetics of the work itself. The harmony of lines and color whisper to my soul the reality of the unifying power of Christ’s Church. The sheer scale and scope of such a work that brings into unity so many different shapes and hues of glass leads me to a deeper yearning for the work of evangelization of all peoples who hunger and thirst for righteousness!

My experience as an artist has taught me that, while working on a large scale piece of art, it is imperative to take periodic breaks, step back, and look to see the whole of the artwork. If the artist doesn’t take these moments of needed rest and assessment, the work runs a high risk of becoming distorted due to a narrow perspective. In the same way, it is important for us as Orthodox Christians to take a step back and look at how the mosaic of the Church in America has been forming. We know that the Lord in His wisdom has laid out a perfect pattern and foundation which the Church is to be built upon (Eph 2:20, Matt 16:17–19). This pattern is universal and whole, regardless of the time or region in which the Church is to be incarnated, and it is precisely in this knowledge of the Holy Spirit’s ineffable and infallible guidance and wisdom that we as the Church in America must be still and take a much needed broader look. In other words, we must step back from charging forward with the current political and social movements that are potentially characterizing so much of the discourse within the Church around race and, more importantly, the way in which we are looking to engage our society and those who we are called to evangelize.

As an iconographer, one of the strongest temptations for me is to move beyond the humble and pious referencing of traditional iconographic prototypes and become lost in the overindulgence and inappropriate reliance on the myriad of iconographic examples that have been made so readily available thanks to the internet. This overreliance on multiple images and the choices they seemingly provide too often convolute and obscure the prayerful stillness that is needed, for it is in this stillness that the work produced is transformed into an Icon and not simply a painting. I believe that the overreliance on current ideas and methods to address any issues of race is painfully similar. In the desire to do good, many in the Church are rushing headlong into a frenzy of programs and workshops that provide a pattern but not the pattern by which the Icon of reconciliation is made manifest.

On May 25th of this year, the world witnessed a horrible scene of violence in the death of George Floyd, a scene by which not just our country but the whole of the world was thrown into a fury of protest, riots, and destruction. Interestingly enough, on May 31st, six days after the horrific kneeling on the neck of George Floyd, the Church celebrated Holy Pentecost, as we always do, with the vesperal prayers of kneeling. For too many of the faithful the profundity of the proximity of these events was lost; moreover, I believe that our response as the Church was largely lost. The troparion for Pentecost states:

When the most High came down and confused the tongues, / He divided the nations; / but when he distributed the tongues of fire / He called all to unity. / Therefore, with one voice, we glorify the All-holy Spirit!

Allow me to conclude with a challenge to all you CrossRoad alumni: What will you do with the puzzle pieces of the curious timeline and luminous troparion I’ve put before you? I believe the education and formation you’ve received has uniquely equipped all of you with what our country and this world so desperately needs: the formation to follow the pattern by which the Church will answer the painful cry of the world for reconciliation.
My brother Alexios and I launched our newest project, Green New World, in late December 2019. I was wrapping up my time in college with a degree in economics and a minor in journalism, excited to put these skills to the test. Alexios was going through a film program, but felt dissatisfied with the lack of structure, expertise, and overall environment. Together, we were both eager to explore the world, tell stories, and figure out what exactly is going on. And our dream was, and still is, to create a show that travels the world, highlighting the latest innovations in sustainable technology that will help our planet.

As Orthodox Christians created in God's image and likeness, we are blessed with this Earth we call home. During our time at CrossRoad, we learned about vocation, our calling in life to serve God and neighbor. For us, taking care of God’s creation is an essential part of that vocation. The Green New World endeavor combines our two passions, economics and filmmaking, to create a project that will hopefully inspire innovative stewardship of the earth. We were blessed with the time, talent, and treasure to create this project and use our passion to serve. We want to let people know there are positive answers out there to build a greener future.

After launching Green New World, we researched our first location to film and discovered Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week in the United Arab Emirates in January 2020. We theorized it was the best way to see as many different technologies and companies located in one place set against the beautiful backdrop of the desert. Also, we wanted to know why one of the largest oil producers in the world held a marquee annual event dedicated to sustainability. We started a company, Atlas Ventures, registered for the event, and walked away from college, one with a degree and one without. We know every great success story starts with at least one dropout.

We learned about new innovations with solar generating more efficient power, vertical farming systems powered by LED lights. In Dubai we visited a sustainable city operating on carbon net-zero budget thanks to solar power, recycled wastewater, biodome greenhouses producing food, and intelligent architectural design to reduce cooling costs in the desert.

To us, the most inspiring technology we saw had to be atmospheric water generators. We met a company from India...
pulling oxygen out of the atmosphere and, through a process of filtering and mineralization, creating clean drinking water. **Over 800 million people do not have access to clean water**, and right before our eyes we saw a possible answer. This solution can help people in rural and impoverished areas but also developed parts of the world create a decentralized, sustainable water supply.

It fuels us to know there are companies out there helping innovate one of the building blocks of life, water, and now we see it as part of our vocation to help spread the word, and one day the technology, to different parts of the world.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in March and forced us into lockdown, we built a studio in our parents’ garage and launched our YouTube channel. We began uploading videos with a wide range of topics such as the circular economy, test-driving a Tesla, and interviewing people working on sustainable projects.

At this present moment, we are in Greece filming for Green New World and also making a documentary about our homeland’s response to economic insecurity, the pandemic, and climate change, finding the people who are working on these hard problems in order to build a better, greener future. We are blessed with the time, talent, and treasure to tell these stories and hope to grow our role as stewards of the planet. It is only fitting that our journey begins again in our homeland.

If we do not step up as Orthodox Christians to protect creation, then who will? Check out our work on Youtube at Green New World or our website at: http://greennewworld.tv.

**Alexios (June 2017) and John (July 2016) are joined with their sister and recent 2020 alumna, Mary Catherine in Greece pictured in front of the solar farm in Tilos. This small Greek island is the first island capable of powering itself with 100% clean, renewable energy. Although the population is only around 500 people, 13,000 tourists visit the island per year, and the island is a great example of small-scale sustainability that can pave the way for larger, future developments!**
Susan is a sister in Christ who is serving time in a state prison in Texas. She shares, “I used to dream about getting paroled—what I would eat first and finally getting a good night’s sleep. Now I dream of finally hearing the Divine Liturgy, experiencing the Mystery of the Eucharist...I pray for my Baptism and Chrismation.”

At the Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry we are blessed to minister to people like Susan every day. We are an agency of the Assembly of Bishops of the United States, tasked with serving those who are incarcerated and their families. We minister not only to Orthodox people who have found themselves in prison but also to brothers and sisters who, in the darkness of a prison, have discovered the Faith and are seekers. As prison is inherently intense, so the Lord moves in intense and powerful ways in prison. Another prisoner recently wrote to us: “When I first started my Christian walk, I was searching for faith, any faith. I thought I could wrestle my own understanding from the Bible through numerous, mostly Protestant, Bible studies, on my own. Until I found Orthodoxy, I was on a holy quest, but I was under my own sinful power and authority. I was trying to discover the holy and divine message of the Bible without the Church and community that received the Bible through the Holy Spirit. Thank you for helping me to find the true Church. When I parole in 2021, I will find an Orthodox parish church to continue my Christian journey. I have finally found what I have been searching for my entire life.”

I came to this ministry without seeking it out. However, as we know, the Lord has his purposes for us and presents opportunities we can say yes to, and it has made my life richer in every way.

If you are interested in being involved or making a gift to support an Orthodox presence in prisons, visit www.theocpm.org or email us at info@theocpm.org.
BEFORE YOU DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR LIFE...

DECIDE WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR SUMMER

CrossRoad Summer Institute
A 10-day experience for Orthodox Christian high school juniors and seniors to explore their purpose, develop close friendships, and grow closer to Christ.

2021 SESSIONS
- June 12 – June 22
  Session 1: Boston
- June 29 – July 9
  Session 2: Boston
- July 19 – July 29
  Session 3: Chicago

APPLY TODAY: CROSSROADINSTITUTE.ORG
Neiled is Your BEAUTY

From God’s good earth was I hewn and shaped ages ago to be His lasting abode to be the godly lustre of that divinely favored pearl sprawled majestically astride the Bosporus a sovereign and sanctified edifice risen from the broken hearts of men-repentant the royal gift of an emperor and his people to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to rival the works of Solomon—no. forgotten a votive offering of man-made brick surmounting brick climbing heavenwards and meeting God’s abundant grace descending spilling downward as untold mercies and blessing His Eternal Kingdom condescending into an all-encompassing dome, the sign of His accepting the humble dedication of this brick-and-mortar building to His ineffable and unalterable Wisdom

That is, I am consecrated to Jesus Christ, Divine Logos, God become-for-all Incarnate the savior and redeemer of the lost to Him and for Him I stand gloriously dedicated, the new grotto filled, the new empty tomb, topos and locus welcoming His august presence the presence of that God-self-emptyed, that crucified stranger that demonized Galilean that ridiculed Jew our Risen and Ascended Lord and although the Son of Man had nowhere to lay His head let me become a place of His dwelling and His unutterable glory a holy place wherein the Truth of the I AM resounding through the ages may be manifest, as Wisdom Incarnate-Gospel and Eucharist the God-Man, God-with-Us the Hagia Sophia

And what is this? a whole host gathers before me they’ve come to pray in a vastly different way, they’ve forgotten my name they’ve forgotten the Way and yet they pray, though they veil the beauty of His Face they’ve forgotten He calls to each of them by name He, Who called them out of the nothingness of non-existence He calls them to pray and though they’ve forgotten so much they’ve come to pray and although they’ve veiled the beauty of His Face they’ve gathered here and are kneeling now in the palm of His hands they bow and they pray and the forgotten words of the Word, of God Who is Love, rain down upon all flesh as mercy and blessing to soften hearts hardened and to purify sanguine minds to drench fertile fields of souls thirsting for the True God under the all-encompassing dome of His inescapable and unfathomable Wisdom

Lord, hear my prayer I have not forgotten You for Whom I exist Be present here in Your holy place, that all those who come to me might be gently turned to You

Pray in me all you who thirst for streams of living water pray in me all you who hunger for righteousness pray in me all you whose deep hearts cry bitterly unto the deep and your thirst and your hunger and your desiring cries shall be satisfied for am I not the House of the Living God?

Pray in me, O Lord and teach them to pray pray yourself in me and pray yourself in them and all will freely and joyfully remember at last the wondrous beauty of Your face and call upon You by name, our Lord God and Savior, Jesus Christ together with your Unoriginate Father and your All-Holy and Life-Giving Spirit now and forever and unto the ages of ages Amen.
IN 2011, I had the opportunity to attend CrossRoad, which heavily influenced the direction I was about to take in my vocation. I have always been a painter, primarily using oil colors to paint portraits, landscapes, and decorative art. Small commissions were my main source of income as a college student, but when I graduated from Hellenic College and tried different jobs, I still felt like art was my calling. My love for art and for the Church were pointing me in only one direction: iconography. The Orthodox Church presents us with a rich artistic tradition, which is a big part of our worship process. I expressed my interest in learning iconography to Fr. Maximos Constas, who encouraged me to pursue my passion professionally. He introduced me to Dimitris Siregelas, who is one of the top iconographers in Greece. For the past three years I have been traveling to Greece to study iconography under Siregelas. The most characteristic aspect of the churches in Greece, which left a huge impression on me, is that they are fully covered in icons. My goal is to create a richer culture of iconography in the West. Each Orthodox Christian carries the responsibility to preserve our traditions using the gifts we were given. My vocation is to preserve and strengthen my faith through iconography, and I am thankful to CrossRoad and Hellenic College for always being a guiding force in my life.

“My love for art and for the church were pointing me in only one direction: iconography.”

Reflection from the artist:

This icon is painted in egg tempera, on a 8x10in hand made wooden board prepared in the traditional way by me. It depicts prophet Elias receiving food from a raven.
The No Sweat Way to Give

When you become a monthly donor, we’ll send you a CrossRoad sweatshirt!

GIVE TODAY!

Give Online at crossroadinstitute.org/giving

Your support of any amount allows CrossRoad to stay vibrant, strong, and accessible to all students.

CrossRoad has created strong relationships, fostered by Christ. The impact of CrossRoad is made possible through generous donors and alumni who invest in the program’s sustainability and growth initiatives.

Give by Phone at 617-850-1312

By check through the mail to: 50 Goddard Avenue Brookline, MA 02445

On Facebook at Facebook.com/crossroadyouth
ABOVE: June 2010 alumni celebrate their 10 years since attending CrossRoad with a Zoom reunion!

RIGHT: July 2009 alumnus, John Mellas, and his wife Mary MacLane at their wedding in September 2020 with his brother-in-law and former 2009 staff member Dn. Eleftherios Constantine.

BOTTOM RIGHT: 2019 staff member, Sarah Manuel, and her husband, Mark Mandeville, at their wedding in July 2020 with her godsister and 2020 alumna Sotiria Bessinas.

BELOW: CrossRoad alumni at the YAL Chicago Conference in February, 2020.
TOP LEFT: Former CrossRoad staff Angela Tsarouhis (2018 & 2019) and Fr. Paul Dinkov (2015) serving as the new Youth Director and Assistant Priest respectively at Sts. Peter and Paul Greek Orthodox Church in Glenview, IL.

ABOVE: 25 CrossRoad alumni at OCF’s College Conference East in December 2019.

LEFT: CrossRoad alumni and former staff at the wedding of Catherine Alexandres (July 2013 alumna) and Mitch Morfas (2019 Staff) in January 2020.

BELOW LEFT: Presv. Olenka Ramos (2014 & 2015 staff), Demetri Constantine (June 2010 alumnus & 2017 staff) and their spouses reunite representing CrossRoad with their matching sweatshirts while hanging out with the Ramos children.

BELOW: A few CrossRoad alums—Sarah Stewart (June 2014), Kira Godshall (July 2016), Kali Godshall (June 2015), and Anna Korchak (Session 2 2018)—with fellow OCFers on the OCF Real Break trip to Thessaloniki in March 2020.
TOP LEFT: CrossRoad alumni celebrating the wedding of Katya Soot, (June 2009) to Adam Corbin in January 2020 in Portland, Oregon.

ABOVE: The Schaefer CrossRoad alumni siblings celebrating at their sister Ellena’s wedding in September 2020. Pictured from left to right: Joel (June 2008), Jordan (June 2009), Isaac (July 2011), Ellena (June 2014), Andrew (June 2016), and their youngest brother.

LEFT: The Tzetzis and Lionas families (all CrossRoad alums or former staff), together after the baptism of Tommy Tzetzis, for whom Nick and Amanda Lionas served as godparents on November 28, 2020.

BOTTOM LEFT: July 2013 alumna Despina Petrides married 2018 CR staff member, Elias Pappas, on December 28, 2019. Lots of CR alumni in their bridal party, including their Koumbara, Eleftheria Papadopoulos (Session I 2018) and siblings, Photini Buck (July 2010) and Zoe Petrides (July 2016).

BELOW: July 2013 alumna, Leah Stokes, at her wedding to Stefan Metrakos in August 2020 with their Koumbari and former CR Staff/Alumni Elias and Despina Pappas.
TOP LEFT: June 2010 alumna, Andrea Zecy, at her wedding to Andrew Kalina, in November 2020 along with her parents and brother, John Zecy (2007).

TOP RIGHT: The first-ever CrossRoad Chicago cohort reunites on Zoom in November 2020.

ABOVE: June 2010 alumnus, Ted Nieuwsma, at his wedding to Kara Swanson on September 5, 2020, along with his brothers who are also CrossRoad alumni: John (June 2015) and Timothy (Session 3, 2018).

LEFT: 2005 alumna Chrysa Jonas at her wedding to Nick Dina with her siblings, two of whom are also CR alums: Anthony Jonas (July 2010) and Andrianna Jonas (July 2013)

BOTTOM LEFT: CrossRoad alumni serving as interns at the Neighborhood Resilience Project in Summer 2020.

BELOW: July 2015 alumna, Elaine Hamilton, at her wedding to Spiro Morris in July 2020 with their Koumbaro and alumnus Panayiotis Stavroupoulos (June 2017).
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

ALUMNI updates

Niko Birbilis 2007

His engagement ring burned a hole in his pocket, as he walked the cobblestone streets of Savannah with his girlfriend, waiting for the right moment to ask. Thank God she said yes, and months later Kelsey and Niko were making plans with the Church, calling reception venues, and trying to whittle their guest list down to two hundred. Then COVID-19 happened. They went with their plans and reception, and their max guests dropped to thirteen. Their May 10 wedding ended up being beautifully intimate, and was more than they could’ve asked for. All things considered, 2020 has been a great year.

Constantine Christakis JUNE 2010

Constantine graduated from the Florida State University College of Law in May 2019 and was admitted to the Florida Bar in September 2019. For the past year he has been practicing securities and corporate law at Nason, Young, Gerson, Harris & Fumero, P.A., a business law firm located in Palm Beach Gardens, FL. He hopes everyone is doing well and staying safe and healthy.

Marina Dimas JUNE 2015

As a CrossRoad alumna and former staff-member, a teaching that has been ingrained in Marina is that our vocation is unique and ongoing. After graduation, she pictured herself working for a large corporation, but God had another plan. Marina was drawn to continue her work with the OVM, and applied for the Communications Fellow role with Telos this past summer. Working for Telos Project has shown her the extreme importance of keeping teens and young adults actively engaged in the Church. Her prayer is that others see the urgency in ministering to our youth to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for our Orthodox Faith.

Chrysa (Jonas) Dina 2005

Like everyone else, Chrysa has had a whirlwind of a year! On top of working her full time job as a firefighter/paramedic during this pandemic, she got married to her wonderful husband, Nick, as a firefighter/paramedic during this pandemic, as well. They had to make quite a few changes as a family. 2020 has been a challenge but she is looking forward to the future!

Carla Ghaoui 2004

Carla has been very busy juggling work and spending time with her husband and two girls. She has learned to be much more creative in finding activities for the girls during the pandemic and to be grateful for everyday they have together as a family. 2020 has been a challenge but she is looking forward to the future!

Erin Gray 2004

Erin currently resides in southeastern Virginia with her husband Rich, an active duty sailor, her two young childrenrats and Benjim, loyal coonhound Cheyenne, and several rambunctious chickens. Erin completed her degree in Psychology at Old Dominion University and plans to begin her Masters in Social Work next fall. In the meantime, she is a stay-at-home mama, softball coach, Sunday school teacher, and an active council member at Domition Orthodox Church in Norfolk, VA.

Victoria Martine JUNE 2017

This year, Victoria will graduate from college and will continue her education at the Indiana University School of Medicine! With the recent pandemic, she has come to realize the true impact of the medical community as well as the importance of having strong support in friends and family.

John Mellas 2007 2008

John Mellas got married! He and Mary met at a Young Adult Retreat put on by the SF Metropolis in April 2019. He proposed on January 11, 2020 and their wedding was on September 5, 2020, at the Church of the Annunciation in Santa Maria, CA. With the limited numbers allowed in the church, they only were able to have their parents and a few others inside during the service. They now live in Novato, CA, thirty minutes north of San Francisco. They also have started their own Orthodox photography company together called Mellas Media and have already been blessed to take pictures for the ordinations (Diaconate and priesthood) for Fr. Alexander Eliades (July 2010).

Nick Mitrokos 2006

Nick works for Penn State University doing Information Technology for the police. He got their UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) program started for tailgate surveillance. He has a 4-year old Great Dane (pictureed), he also has been working to make a small beef jerky business and started to explore woodworking while avoiding COVID.

Zoe Montague 2019

Zoe just started her freshman year at Princeton University and is considering majoring in English. Although she is sad that classes are online, this did enable her to move to Puerto Rico for the fall semester, where she is renting a small house with three other freshman girls. She is enjoying the sunny beaches, learning a lot from all of her classes, and occasionally chasing giant spiders out of the house. She is very grateful for the way that God provided this opportunity and she has felt His presence very clearly as many difficult challenges, from power outages to figuring out transportation to the grocery store, have all worked out for the best.

Emily (Snell) Neve 2005

Emily and her husband, Joel, welcomed their fourth child, John William Nathaniel (Cassian) in January 2020. The world shut down right after her 40 days and John William’s baptism, also shutting down all of her grand plans to finally put on real pants and get out of the house. In January of 2018, pigs flew and she left her first love, the Glorious State of Texas, for a new adventure in her husband’s native Arctic homeland, (far, far, far) Northern Indiana. Where they jumped right in and started rebuilding their homestead, this time with snow. She is still busy home schooling Lucy (13), Thomas (9), and Mary Olive (6), making Orthodox toys for her shop, Edmund + Ambrose, making spreadsheets in the middle of the night to perfect her laundry routine, and finally painting icons.


Fr. Andrew and Pres. Caroline (Koutoussos) Pavlakos welcomed their first baby, Konstantinos Markos, on June 3, 2020. He is their ray of sunshine during the COVID-19 pandemic and arrived one week early! Kosta is also the first nephew of proud uncle Peter Koutoussos (June 2009), Pres. Caroline’s brother. Fr. Andrew is also beginning his second year as the Proistamenos of St. George Greek Orthodox Church in New Port Richey, FL.

Mary Polydoros 2004

Since going to CrossRoad in Chicago a year ago, Mary finished her first year at college and has already started her sophomore year. Mary has continued to keep in contact with the friends she made at CrossRoad and she hopes to see them soon once COVID clears.

Charles Tumazos 2004

Charles is a member of St. Mark’s Greek Orthodox Church in Boca Raton, FL. He manages two LLCs in Florida: Strategic Point Partners which does a variety of Equity Finance and Technology Consulting projects around the country, as well as Divine Initiative Ministries LLC, which focuses on providing personal development, vocational training, and thought leadership to men who are reentering the workforce after a major life change such as incarceration, military service, or a major health issue. Charles is involved in a number of community organizations and is enjoying an improved quality of life after losing 160 pounds after having a bariatric surgery performed in May 2020. He looks forward to seeing his yellow CrossRoad alumni and staff soon!

Elyse Zappia 2004 2007

Elyse Zappia has been going to graduate school part-time and is excited to announce she is scheduled to earn her Master in Business Administration degree this December 2020! Since 2016, Elyse has been working at NYU Langone Medical Center in Manhattan. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the greatest challenges of our careers, she has never been more proud to be an MRI Technologist.
Amanda continues to work as a social worker on behalf of foster children. Scott turns 7 in January and is in first grade. Eleni is two and is sweet as can be.

Mary Long
Amended 2024-05, 2009-2011

What a year 2020 has been! It has challenged & inspired us to reflect, adapt, and grow in unexpected ways. Mary started a Pilates and wellness business right before the onset of COVID-19 (Soma Lux Pilates, Wellness & Travel). Growing a business during the pandemic has been a source of incredible learning and evolution for which she is thankful. She loves what she is doing and finds fulfillment in helping people through movement, and looks forward to destination Pilates & wellness retreats starting next year. Mary was invited to join the board of Asia Women, an organization for Orthodox women (and she encourages female alumni to check it out). Starting in March, Mary led one of the CrossRoad alumni devotional groups, which lasted through September, and is incredibly humbled and grateful to have reconnected with the amazing women who are a part of that group. She sends love and well wishes to the whole CR family!

Fr. Nicholas & Pres. Demetria Manuel
Amended 2021, Alumni July 2018

Fr. Nick and Pres. Demetria had an eventful year! In November 2019 they welcomed their first son, John Panagiotis. On December 5th, Fr. Nick was ordained to the Diaconate and then to the priesthood on March 15, 2020. Fr. Nick is serving as the Assistant Priest at the Metropolis of Chicago Youth Director. While working hard to pivot our youth/young adult programming during COVID, Fr. Nick also renovated a new house and they moved to a suburb of Chicago in June. They are grateful to be able to carefully gather with family and close friends again, as a lesson learned is that humans were not designed to parent in isolation!!!

Susan Athanasia Kouris
Amended June 2018 & Staff 2018

The past few months have been a mix of reflecting on new goals during the pandemic as we are living through and getting back to normal as much as possible for the foreseeable future. Motivated by her work in an inpatient unit during COVID, Susan started her Master of Public Health this past September, while continuing her work at Boston Children’s Hospital in the Division of Critical Care, supporting clinicians in the Medical Surgical Intensive Care Unit. Her current graduate studies have been formative in the discovery of her vocation, building on her undergraduate theological studies in unexpected ways. Service comes in many forms, and nothing has made this more clear than the past eight months. She is looking forward to integrating all that she is learning into her professional work, with the foundation being how her work is rooted in love for Christ and neighbor.

Nick & Amanda Lionas
Amended 2020, Staff 2012

Nick is now serving as the Assistant to Metropolitan Nicholas of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Detroit. With such a difficult year as well, Anna & Fr. K have faced, but they are grateful for all the good things that have come out of such a difficult year as well. Anna is still working as the Director for the Chicago expansion project of Telos, TelosGamma, and Fr. K is still working as the Metropolis of Chicago Youth Director.

Fr. Michael Tishel
Amended 2017

Fr. Michael and family are happily settled in their new digs in Marietta, GA (30 minutes north of Atlanta). The kids just got a new kitten named Lila. Pres. Catherine has been enjoying gardening as well as a meaningful expression of Fr. M’s sense of vocation. He very much misses his CR family, though, and encourages anyone to drop him a line or even come to visit. “Well show you what it’s like for a Yankee to provide some good southern hospitality!”

Despina Wilson
Amended 2019

Despina completed her Master of Divinity and moved to Boston for good to begin her new role as Hel- lenic College Holy Cross Enrollment Project Coordinator and Associate Recruiter.

Elle Pappas
Amended 2017

Elle Pappas has somehow become very busy in quarantine! Elle’s dog Oliver Giancola-Pappas lost an eye on a 10 hour drive, she went offshore fishing and did not like it one bit, and she has stepped into a new role at work which means she is learning everything virtually and on the fly, much like many of you! Elle currently manages 400+ junior bankers across North and South America and supports their well-being during extremely long work weeks. She wants to remind everyone that you can’t care for others or do your job well unless you take care of yourself first. Log off TikTok and go on a walk and say some prayers or get some extra sleep. It may be easier said than done, but it makes all the difference.

Angela Tsarouhis
Amended 2020, 2019

While “noteworthy” life updates for Angela include starting a full time job, there are other important aspects of 2020 she’d like to share (may read to the melody of “Raindrops on Roses” in the Sound of Music): the beautiful and edifying BBC show Call the Midwife (so much about vocation included!); music and literature that remind us we aren’t alone; mentors and friends gifted in speaking the truth in love; And the grace of God which sustains us when we feel like we just can’t anymore. “These are a few of her favorite things” [In 2020]!”

Fr. & Pres. Ourania Chatzis
Amended 2004-2005

Greetings from Canada! Fr. Stavros, Pres. Ourania, and their children are settling into their new life and parish, St. Catherine’s GOC in St. Catherine’s, Ontario. Over the past year, Prez writes that her relationship with Christ has been cultivated more than any other time in her life and she has started her true vocation, icon sketching and iconography. This is quite the journey as she really has no formal training but rather she sketches with prayer, and she sketches divinity with humanity, with many blessings, since they spent a lot of time with many close friends, and extended our family by becoming koumbari with multiple people who are also Crossroad Alumni.

Erini Haji-Georgi
Amended 2017

Irene Haji-Georgi and Panayiotis Steele got married this summer! Panayiotis is in his last year of Holy Cross and Irene is now working as a Spiritual Care Resident at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital. She sends love and well wishes to the whole CR family!

Elias & Despina Pappas
Amended 2018, Alumni August 2013

Despina and Elias got married on December 28th, 2019. They moved into married student housing at HCHC and Despina spends her time babysitting on campus while Elias is working towards completing the Masters of Divinity program. Elias is expected to graduate in December of 2021. This year was filled with many blessings, since they spent a lot of time with many close friends, and extended our family by becoming koumbari with multiple people who are also Crossroad Alumni.

Devon Latzen
Amended 2019-2020

After stepping down as CrossRoad Assistant Director, Devon was so excited to see Alex Demos come aboard to take over the role! He can’t wait to see what Kyra and Alex cook up for this summer. Devon has been diving back into his lifetime career of web and app design, doing freelance work until he graduates, which has been really fun. He was afraid to follow his heart, especially when he was leaving something so amazing in order to do it. But one step at a time, he has loved seeing where the path is leading!
Upcoming Events

CROSSROAD 2021
SESSION 1: June 12–June 22 (Boston)
SESSION 2: June 29–July 9 (Boston)
SESSION 3: July 19–July 29 (Chicago)

Priority Application Deadline: January 4, 2021
Regular Application Deadline: February 16, 2021

2021 VIRTUAL ALUMNI RETREAT:
March 12–14, 2021

Hellenic College Inc.
50 Goddard Ave
Brookline, MA, 02445