Dear CrossRoad Alumni,

On a recent call with a Telos team, they shared a tiny detail that’s kinda rocked my world.

The Telos teams are groups at 14 pilot parishes across the country who are building real relationships with young adults and then piloting new ministry for and with them. They are digging into the real struggles and joys of life for twenty-somethings today. A number of you CrossRoad alums are part of those teams. Do you remember those hard questions you asked us at CrossRoad about the relationship of life and faith? The Telos Project is asking those within parishes.

This one team added a little detail to everything they’re doing. For each of their initiatives they make it clear: young adults are welcome to bring their friends. Not just Orthodox friends, any friends.

I don’t know about you, but I forget that I can invite my friends to church. And I think most of our churches forget that we don’t have to wait around for someone—probably who grew up Orthodox—to move to the area and maybe decide to join us. We forget that the entire New Testament challenges us with this message: Jesus Christ did not enter this world for a select group of people. Rather, his invitation was a radical doors-open-wide to all people, all races, all nations. When we forget this, we become like the deluded religious leaders of Scripture who made their faith about ritual purity and the letter of the law, rather than about radical love and healing. In Scripture we see examples of this crazy faith and hope: “Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on.” (Mark 2:4)

These Telos folks have this courageous faith that this parish which has been lifegiving for them is worth inviting their friends to. It’s changing the shape of their ministry. There’s a beautiful dynamic between parishioners and new people. They ask good, hard questions that make the parishioners think more deeply about their very reason (their telos) for being.

Perhaps some of our parishes aren’t ready for more of us to invite our friends. But more often than not, I think it just takes a little courage to get the ball rolling. We’re in the business of dreaming, at least, of what is possible. If you want to brainstorm with us, we’d love to hear from you!

And in the meantime, may this issue of Down the Road bring you some light and hope. We love you all.

[signature]

With love in Christ,
Ann Mistakos Bezerides
OVM Director
ABOUT
DOWN
THE ROAD

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“They are humble and hungry,”

he said. Last spring, our retreat speaker characterized you, the CR alumni, in this way. He stood before a room filled with CR alumni spanning the fourteen years of this program’s life. Their eyes were gleaming with anticipation - ready to hear a word, to be consoled or challenged. Humility. Readiness. Anticipation. Hunger. This has been your gift to me over the years. My heart is brimming with joy and gratitude that I have received your desire, and allow it to guide my life.

What is more important - hunger and humility, or the words that were delivered at that retreat?

As a speaker, preacher, and teacher, when I stand before a room filled with gleaming and hungry eyes, I feel a surge of electrifying excitement. What will be said? What new ideas and experiences will emerge from this cauldron of fiery desire into which I am about to cast my meager words? What depths in my own simple soul will be unearthed by the powerful excavators before me, yearning for something meaningful, enduring, and potent?

If we have desire, then life becomes radiant, meaningful, beautiful. Desire defeats fear. We must not incriminate desire. It's our friend, our soulmate, the very essence of our being.

When we embrace the desire within us, when we allow ourselves to be consumed by it and, in turning toward the world around us, see everything in this light, we know that desire is everything.

Embrace your desire. Cultivate it. Treasure it. Hold it delicately in the hands of your soul, and you will see it begin to blossom, grow, extend out to those around you.

It will transform your life into a living miracle.

Glory to God who planted Holy Desire in our innermost beings.

May we be warmed by and stretch towards the Sun as we grow in our desire and yearning.

But you know all this. After all, you’re the ones who taught it to me in the first place.

Thank you.
HIGHLIGHTS FROM CrossRoad 2018

WHO AM I?
Demetrius Karathanos (Session 3, 2018)

"I've grown so much over these last ten days, whether it be visiting beautiful churches, expanding the knowledge of my faith, or just connecting with fellow like-minded and aged Orthodox Christians. This experience has been life-changing.... This institute as a whole has really allowed me to wrestle with my faith and become comfortable with myself and what I want to do with my life."

WHO IS GOD?
Samuel Cambra (Session 1, 2018)

"I could write for hours about how great CrossRoad is but that's not necessary. The most important thing is faith. CrossRoad has strengthened my faith, brought me closer to God, and inspired me to see Jesus Christ in everyone around me."

WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?
Leila Manneh (Session 1, 2018)

"I've learned that there really shouldn't be an 'other' or an 'us.' We are all the same; separated only by circumstance. It's not fair to divide people into groups, stereotype and avoid them just because they seem different from ourselves."
CROSSROAD TAKES ON CHICAGO!

As many of you know, this summer CrossRoad launched a third session in Chicago, and glory to God, it far exceeded our expectations!

While CrossRoad Chicago followed the same program structure as the sessions in Boston, a program in a new city means a whole new landscape of experiences. As co-director of CrossRoad Chicago, I was thrilled to be able to build a CrossRoad session in my home city. In doing this, even I who grew up in the Chicagoland area, got to explore and experience aspects of Orthodoxy I had never before encountered.

We were blessed to venerate the incorrupt body of modern-day St. Mardarije at the Serbian Monastery, we were anointed by the myrrh from a miraculous icon at St. George Antiochian Church, and we encountered the beautifully unique traditions of our Indian Orthodox brothers and sisters at St. Gregorios Orthodox Church.

We heard from incredible Chicago-based speakers: Dn. Perry Hamalis inspired us through his reflections on his missionary work in Korea; Kathryn Bocanegra called us to be better neighbors in our communities as she shared with us her work in violence prevention and criminal justice; and Rachel Contos motivated us to better serve our brothers and sisters suffering from homelessness as she shared with us her work at the Alliance to End Homelessness.

And of course we explored the great city of Chicago, spending time at the iconic Navy Pier, taking a lake and river boat tour, and capping off the Chicago experience right by feasting on deep dish pizza!

Chicago turned out to be the perfect location to build our third CrossRoad session and we are thankful for all the hospitality we received everywhere we went and especially to all of the donors who made it possible! We look forward to another Chicago session this summer!
On March 23, 46 CrossRoad Alumni from across the U.S. gathered back in Boston for three days of vibrant conversations, thought-provoking sessions, and time for prayer and reflection.

We were blessed to have with us Fr. Turbo Qualls from Reconciliation Services in Kansas City, MI to serve as our keynote speaker for the retreat. With a background in art and social work, Fr. Turbo offered sessions that addressed a theological perspective on beauty, love of neighbor, and racial reconciliation. Alumni were moved by his message. One reflected, "By seeing and realizing this beauty, that will help connect us to our vocation, purpose, and help us find our meaning in life." Another commented, "Fr Turbo’s openness and wisdom made a great impression on me. I was moved and inspired by his willingness to explore complicated issues, minorities, and women in the Church specifically, and the eloquence and sincerity with which he approached these topics."

In addition to these sessions, there were opportunities for fellowship with fellow alums, time for stillness and prayer, and of course communal worship. Saturday evening consisted of an open mic night where alums were given an opportunity to share music, poetry, and art. It was an evening filled with joy and beauty.

The retreat concluded with Divine Liturgy held at the beautiful Holy Cross Chapel, a second home for CrossRoad alumni. What a joy it was to have so many alums back together-their feedback conveyed that they returned home energized and inspired!
“It was so good to be back in the CrossRoad vibe, surrounded by the love and community that the CrossRoaders provide. It is a deeper relationship that cannot be found anywhere else.” — Retreat Participant
CROSSROADERS

Out On The Road

Alumni and Staff at June 2010 alumna Joanna Christakis' wedding to Chris in October 2018.

CR Director Kyra Limberakis, and fellow Alumni and Staff at her wedding in April 2018.

Anna Kallis and Fr. Kosmas Kallis, both CR alumni and former CR staff, with their newborn, Jonah, born on December 10, 2018.

OVM Director Ann Bezzerides and CR Alums at the enthronement of His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago in March 2018.

CR 2009 Alums Emmanuel Magina and Melissa Likiardopoulou with fellow 2009 CrossRoader John Mellas at their wedding in August 2018.

Session One 2018 Alums at Antiochian Village

CrossRoad Alumni with CR directors Fr. Mike Tishel and Kyra Limberakis on the OCF Real Break trip to Thessaloniki, March 2018.

2005 Alums Richard Ajalat, Michelle Torski, and Sarah Kalaris, representing at the Connect Conference in Atlanta, GA in October 2018.
CR Alum Andrew Abboud and fellow July 2011 Alumni at his wedding to Anna in October 2018.

CR Alumni with former CR Director Mary Long at the Orthodox Young Professionals Conference in Denver, CO, in August 2018.

CR Alumni at an OCF district event in Hartford, CT, in April 2018 organized by June 2017 Alumna, Kristina Anastasiades.

June 2015 Alumns Sophia Kyrou and Andreas Kyrrvasilis bump into each other in Athens, Greece Summer 2018.

CR Staff Alumni Jennifer Rice and Jesse Brandow serving as missionaries in Guatemala (May 2018).

Theodora Veronis and Sam Duchow-Presley, July 2017 alums, serving as interns at Project Mexico this past summer.

June 2010 Alum Colin Cleghorn and fellow June 2010ers at his wedding to Michelle in July 2018.

June 2010 Alum Sam Jacobs and fellow June 2010ers at his wedding to Arielle in June 2018.

CR Director Kyr Limberakis, with Session One 2018 Alums Gia Hamalis and Elias Anderson, at a panel discussion on women deacons in the Orthodox Church in November 2018.
Greetings to my fellow CrossRoad alumni all around the country! My name is Susan Kourtis, and I attended CrossRoad in June 2014. I am beginning my term as the Chair for the CrossRoad Alumni Advisory Board, the team that strives to serve all CrossRoad alumni, which at this point is 830 alums!

I am really excited for this year, as we hope to connect more alumni than ever and bring together CrossRoad participants from 2004 all the way through 2018. We are kicking off new initiatives and expanding existing alumni activities: alumni gatherings all around the country, extended resources on vocation (whether you are a year out or fourteen years out from CR!), and continuing to fundraise for the Sophia Bambalis Scholarship Fund, which provides financial assistance to future CrossRoad participants.

This year, we are welcoming five new members to the CrossRoad Alumni Advisory Board, and our whole team of alumni ranges in CR years from 2006 to 2017. We work throughout the year to serve you, our beloved CrossRoad alumni. We hope to hear from you as you offer us ideas and encouragement (email us at crossroad@hchc.edu and follow us on Instagram @crossroadovm), and we pray for you as you journey in your daily lives, discovering your vocation and living God’s word.
COMMUNITY BUILDING COMMITTEE
The Community Building Committee has been working hard on collecting alumni information and growing our regional events initiative. We have had a busy year and have now held another regional meetup in our fifth city! Meet-ups have been held in Michigan, Washington DC, Boston, New York City, and most recently in Chicago. We are also working to collect data through alumni surveys that will allow us to figure out the best groups to form and where alumni are located. If you would like to plan a CrossRoad alumni meet-up in your city or region or to update your contact information, reach out to us at crossroad@hchc.edu!

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
The Financial Sustainability Committee has been working hard to continue fundraising for the Sophia Bambalis Scholarship Fund. This year, we were able to raise $21,186, and we contributed $21,035 to CrossRoad financial aid requests. Our goal as an alumni community is that no accepted participant will be unable to attend CrossRoad because of a financial impediment. For this reason, we work throughout the year to raise money through several campaigns. It is beautiful to see the entire CrossRoad alumni community come together to support future CrossRoad participants, who will in turn become part of our alumni family. To donate, head over to www.hchc.edu/ovm/give, and if you want to receive a CrossRoad sweatshirt, become a monthly donor!

EDUCATION COMMITTEE
One of the main goals of the Alumni Advisory Board is to offer educational resources for alumni of all ages and in all stages of life and vocational discernment. The Education Committee has focused on compiling podcasts, books, and articles as resources for CrossRoad alumni. Members of the Education Committee are also working with the Community Building Committee to identify themes and topics that are of interest to different demographics of alumni, for use both in creating resource lists and expanding the Speaker Series initiative, which they hope to kick off again in 2019.

Board members brainstorming and setting goals at their annual retreat in November 2018
Greetings from the Holy Hill!

What a blessing CrossRoaders are to our Hellenic College Holy Cross community. While participating in the program, they animate our campus with their youthful energy, spiritual zeal, and intellectual curiosity. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly they form meaningful connections with each other, not to mention the staff and faculty charged with making the CrossRoad experience an unforgettable one for every participant. It was a special joy for me last summer to see the Institute expand beyond our campus with the inaugural third session in Chicago, led by Anna Colis Kallis and Kyra Limberakis, both CrossRoad alums.

What amazes me most of all, though, is how those connections endure among you who are proud CrossRoad alums, no matter how long it’s been since you attended your sessions, no matter where your lives have taken you personally and professionally. We love staying connected to you too, so please keep in touch with us as well as with each other. And if you’re still pursuing your education, consider doing so at HCHC. You will always find a warm welcome here, whether you return to visit, to further your studies, or—since some of you are now parents—to bring your own children here for CrossRoad not so many years from now!

May God bless you always!

Rev. Fr. Christopher T. Metropulos, DMin
President
In early 2018, Telos Project pilot parishes hosted conversations with young adults in their communities to get to know them and to more fully understand their lives and relationship with the Church. In May, representatives of all the teams brought that new, concrete knowledge to our first annual Telos consultation at the Boston Marriott Newton. Mark Moraitakis, Senior Director, Customer and Market Insights, Chick-fil-A, and Sophia Linebaugh, industrial designer and 2010 CrossRoad alumna, coached teams in a design thinking process that will help them take what they have learned and design and test new ways of supporting and engaging young adults in parish life. Representatives returned home to engage in the design thinking process with their entire team and complete applications for up to $10,000 to fund their new ministry ideas. Teams are now realizing those ministry ideas in three important areas of project (and parish) life: team-building for the Telos team itself, building intentional relationships between young adults and other generations in the parish, and reaching out to and supporting young adults directly in their spiritual and religious lives.

"At CrossRoad, we had the opportunity to take a deep dive into vocation. Staff members and fellow CrossRoaders took time to listen to us as we developed what would become lasting relationships, and our experiences contributed to our spiritual growth in powerful ways. On paper, The Telos Project has a different focus—exploring how young adults are engaging with the Orthodox Church. But in my view, it's really an extension of what we learned at CrossRoad. We're not hosting events nor trying to up attendance numbers because it looks good or gives us an artificial measure of 'success.' We're striving to really listen to people, to understand their experiences, to enter into relationship with them, and in that way better connect and grow together. We are striving to love God and neighbor every step of the way, and I've very much enjoyed being part of the process."  —Mariam Aberdeen (June 2009)

"I have grown as a person and closer to Christ by being part of a Telos pilot parish. When I attended CrossRoad about ten years ago, it set me up for the next phase of my life: I knew how to think about vocation during college, and it prepared me for the many challenges college students face. In many ways, Telos is the natural next step, preparing us as young adults to think about what comes next. We have built community and think about our world differently—this time not as the people attending programming, but the ones hosting and leading it to serve our parishes."  —Billy Tabrizi (July 2008)
Orthodoxy, therefore, while insisting upon the need for a direct experience of the Holy Spirit, insists also upon the need for discrimination and sobriety. Our weeping, and likewise our participating in the other gifts of the Spirit, needs to be purged of all fantasy and emotional excitement. Gifts that are genuinely spiritual are not to be rejected, but we should never pursue such gifts as an end in themselves. Our aim in the life of prayer is not to gain feelings or ‘sensible’ experiences of any particular kind, but simply and solely to conform our will to God’s. ‘I seek not what is yours but you,’ says Saint Paul to the Corinthians (2 Cor 12:14); and we say the same to God. We seek not the gifts but the Giver.
(Met. Kallistos, The Orthodox Way)

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware is onto something here. Often I hear people speak of a longing to get the feeling back they had at CrossRoad, the yearning for that spiritual/emotional recharge, the “CrossRoad high.” But how does this feeling relate to our experience of the Holy Spirit that Metropolitan Kallistos describes?

Nostalgia for the CrossRoad experience and the feelings that come along with it are not unjustified. I am the first to admit that I have longed for the feeling I get when CrossRoad is in full swing and every day is vibrant and exciting. I have sought out spiritual recharges through retreats and trips when I am in a lull and my faith life feels bleak.

I would argue, though, that the feeling we long for is much deeper than an emotion or sense of euphoria, and it is certainly not something we can pull out of a box anytime we need a quick spiritual boost. Why? Because that feeling in its best and truest form is not just a feeling but rather the deep abiding grace of the Holy Spirit. THAT’S what we experience at CrossRoad and THAT’S what our hearts and souls chase after. We yearn for the Grace of the Holy Spirit to abide in our hearts, to give us a sense of peace and comfort, to inspire us to be connected to other people the way we were at CrossRoad, to have our hearts opened so wide that there’s no one we can’t love, to see beauty in every moment, and to feel pure, Christ-like joy, even if just for a moment.

When we long for the feeling, though, rather than its source, we are in danger. This is what Metropolitan Kallistos is speaking about. He is warning us not to chase after just “sensible experiences” or feelings, warning us not to “pursue such gifts as an end in themselves.” Rather, we are to seek Christ, as He is the source of these gifts.

If we take a step back and consider the circumstances that provide that feeling or “high” it’s clear that Christ is at the center of everything. Programs like CrossRoad, camp, and retreats are so rejuvenating because Christ is central to every
aspect of the experience. Daily worship, time for stillness, discussions around faith, fellowship with Orthodox peers, devotionals that inspire us to dig deep into our spiritual lives, service experiences that force us outside our comfort zone to see Christ in our neighbor, nourishment from Christ-centered speakers, the stories of the saints who fully lived out their unique and ongoing vocations. Each of these components foster an environment that is enriched by the light of Christ. His Word becomes a lamp for our feet and a light on our path (Psalm 119). He brings Light into our hearts and breathes Life into our soul.

But the reality is, we don’t need CrossRoad, retreats, or camps to allow the grace of the Holy Spirit to abide in our hearts. In fact, relying on those types of experiences for a spiritual reboot is simply unsustainable and potentially dangerous. What we need is to “seek first His Kingdom” (Matt 6:33). This is what we are called to do in every moment of every day. This is the real message of CrossRoad: everyday, in our unique and ongoing ways, we seek to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength...and love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:30). The challenge is real, but the Christian life was never supposed to be easy, nor is accessing the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

So perhaps the next time you’re feeling in a lull and are yearning for that feeling or the ‘CrossRoad high,’ pick up your Bible and read a chapter, call a CR friend to catch up, see if your local church has a weekly service you could go to, talk to your neighbor who may be in a rough patch, find five minutes to have some “be still time,” pull out your CR journal; the list can go on and on. It’s likely you won’t experience any sort of spiritual epiphany or feel the same way you did at CrossRoad, BUT it’s not about the feeling: “Our aim in the life of prayer is not to gain feelings or ‘sensible’ experiences of any particular kind, but simply and solely to conform our will to God’s.”
Finding Our True Home

Devon Latzen CR Assistant Director
(Staff 2018)

For ancient Israel, Zion wasn’t just their home, it was their identity. While Zion stood, so did the people. But when Zion fell, so did the people.

Other nations conquered Israel a few times in the Old Testament, and the ‘Zion barometer’ reflected that. The Babylonian attack was the worst, as they were almost completely wiped out. Besieged, burned, and ravaged – the city fell. And besieged, burned and ravaged – the people sat by the river of Babylon and wept in exile. They couldn’t sing anymore, all they could do was remember a time when the world wasn’t dark and lying in pieces.

We all have a Zion. When I was 16 and my family fell apart, so did I. My friends didn’t see me anymore, and my GPA plummeted to 1.7 that year. I slowly made progress back to being stable, but from then on I found myself rootless and in new places – in a different house, then later in the world of college, and eventually working in a new city. I held major responsibilities, but had no home base that I knew I could return to. I just wanted to go back home, but my Zion had gone down in flames. I would try doing the things I used to do, make things look how they used to look.
But trying to get things back ‘normal’ felt like making sandcastles from the ashes of my former home.

Exile isn’t just a Biblical thing, we know it today. We are exiles as we ache for a time and place that we can’t return to childhood, our grandparents’ arms, maybe even CrossRoad. We feel it as we pass through each phase of life in survival mode, watching as observers, waiting for things to return to normal so we can be ourselves again.

According to Israel back then, God lived near humans in the Jerusalem Temple but nowhere else. They thought that the Temple radiated God’s presence like a spiritual wifi router, and they got great signal in their own land. But after Babylon marched them into a foreign world, they knew that the sweet sweet signal would drop until they had completely left God’s domain, entering a place where He did not have any power.

But while they were in exile, far from any hope of contact, God showed up. A man named Ezekiel started giving them messages. It was like they were getting a phone call on the moon. How was this possible?

Ezekiel’s prophecies changed their understanding of God. They started to understand that God isn’t limited to one place, or to one building. He had followed them into exile. He was everywhere and no human activity could limit His power.

In the same way, I may experience exile, but that never means separation from God. It may mean that everything familiar has burned down, and that the world is quite dark. If that is the case, then it’s okay to stop singing and weep by the river. It is okay to mourn the loss.

Psalm 18:11 says that God “made the darkness His hiding place, the storm clouds a canopy around Him.” God is not afraid of the dark. He is in it with me, helping me realize that His presence was what made everything beautiful to begin with. And he is present here, now, making even this beautiful if I can see it. He isn’t limited to that time or that person or that place.

I work to remember this on a daily basis. For all its beauty, the holiday season can also be a painful reminder of exile. But it also helps me understand that God is guiding me toward Himself, the true Zion which can never be destroyed. Despite the circumstances of the external world, hopefully we can all make progress toward our true home this winter, and feel God’s presence along the way as Christ whispers in the darkness, “I am with you always.”
An invitation to a steward at the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s “Towards a Greener Attica” conference was surreal. It would be three days travelling through the Saronic islands and listening to the examination of the world’s environmental challenges, all alongside some of the world’s leading theologians, scientists, and activists. And beyond all this, it would be a chance to be in the presence of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

When finally lived out, attending the conference shocked me for reasons I hadn’t anticipated. Not only were all of those theologians, scientists, and activists willing to talk to me—they were excited to answer my questions and discuss my hopes for the future. They pulled me from my bubble of perspective, which consisted primarily of college-aged students in a frenzy to figure out what they want to do with their lives. Talking to people at the conference solidified to me that it is okay to follow the twists and turns of your life, and subsequently your vocation.

Coming away from the conference, I began to realize its peculiarity amidst the slew of other Orthodox events I’ve participated in. “Peculiarity” in the best sense of the word, as this conference seemed to have championed Orthodoxy in an entirely new way. To begin, a majority of the people there weren’t Orthodox and many weren’t even Christian. Their unity did not lie in the discussion of church politics or liturgical matters. Rather, they were connected in their prioritization of and reverence for the environment in their work.

Each lecture proved the environment a worthy cause in a different way. For example, there was an entire day of the symposium dedicated to the relationship between economy and ecology, and their joint effect on forced migration. We heard analytical voices that day, presenting economic statistics with ties to the environment, or theological viewpoints of modern issues we face. But we also heard from people on the frontlines of damage control of our earth’s environmental situation—a refugee forced to flee his country of Iran, a scientist from India whose activism has turned around a seed crisis for farmers there.

The goal of the conference was a beautifully simple thing—it was communal recognition that there are necessary environmental changes to be made, both in attitude and in practice, in order to serve God and our neighbor better. And, in the end, this was achieved through the diversity of those in attendance—the jumping between cause and effect in how we treat and regard the environment. It encouraged the idea of how interconnected we are in our efforts and how we will ultimately share in their effect, both positive and negative. And perhaps this is exactly the imperative we must realize as individuals as we look towards the future. I certainly have come away from the experience with a greater regard for how my actions have environmental effect and with great hope in continued improvement.
VOCATION OF A

FIREFIGHTER

Chrysa Jonas (2005)

When I was eight years old, I suffered a traumatic injury that easily could have cost me my life if it were not for the quick response of a soccer coach who noticed I needed help, a referee who quickly ripped off his shirt to stop the blood, a friend who ran and called 911, the firefighters and paramedics who quickly came to my rescue, and the grace of God.

From then on, I grew up wishing I could be a firefighter/paramedic. I never truly told anyone, though. Perhaps I mentioned it in passing, but no one took it seriously—I didn’t even take it seriously. I was afraid of being laughed at, discouraged, told that I couldn’t do it, especially as a woman. I went to Crossroad in 2005 and told everyone I wanted to be a pediatrician, maybe a physical therapist—either way, that’s not what I really wanted. I went through the motions of what I was expected to do as a female, all the while ignoring what was in the back of my mind: my real vocation—my true calling.

The call to the fire service was like an extreme longing every time I passed by a firehouse, every time an ambulance, truck, or engine screamed by me, and every time I saw anything dealing with the fire service on TV. I would just stop whatever I was doing and take a few moments to think: that’s what I want to be doing. My heart would feel like it was swelling. I remember a few times I would be walking with people and I’d just stop and stare at a firehouse. I was told to “just do it already” and that I would be great at it because I love the fire service so much.

When I was halfway done with college, I decided that I needed to listen to God’s voice and not the voices of society. I graduated and immediately went back to school, starting with EMT, then fire academy, and finally paramedic school. I studied hard and broke physical barriers that I never imagined I could. There aren’t very many of us women, but females in the fire service are becoming a little more common.

Each day, whether I am at work or not, I am blessed to know that God has given me the capability of helping my community in lifesaving efforts through firefighting and through emergency medicine. I love serving God and my community, so being a firefighter and a paramedic allows me to do just that. Not everyone is cut out to work in emergency situations and, since God gave that ability to me, I will use it to my fullest extent by risking my own life. Some think it’s crazy. To me, it’s normal. It’s part of me.

Listen to your voice, which is actually God’s voice. I am a woman. I am strong. I am successful. I am a firefighter. I am a paramedic. I am a Crossroad alumna. I am an Orthodox Christian.
Set free

Shades of night fall across the land,
She clutches her heart in her hand,
Not any but one,
Her hard work all undone,
As she stands she is shaken and ravaged by a force so fierce,
Her heart almost pierced by a rending blow,
She had no bruises and no scars to show,
But her scars were real and many could see,
they turned a blind eye the crowd too carefree,
she had been kidnapped an abductee,
The group came forward and then retreated clutched in their hand
they had the key,
They could not unlock her cage and set her free because they were
blind to her misery,
One day she looked up and saw nothing no cage no crowd of the
carefree,
The prison was her thought the bars made of sadness and the walls
pain but the key,
The key was her love for herself,
Her heart set free.

By Zared Salome
(Session 3, 2018)
Old City
Katia Christakis is a 2007 alumna and works as a Studio Art Program Coordinator at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Drawn from memory, “Old City” is an assemblage of memories and images of Rethymno, the city in Crete where my family is originally from. It’s a place where past and present walk hand in hand—ancient next to gyro stands, Venetian and Turkish architecture layered with advertisements and (ignored) traffic signs, the swarm of daily life meeting tourists—with the everpresent porch or stoop for neighbors to gather and gossip. I love the idea of each door and each street having a history that’s just as meaningful as the door that belongs to my specific family. We have that to some degree here, but the sense of hospitality and togetherness that comes from having been in the same place for generations is tangibly different.
When Dr. Kathryn Bocanegra, a social work professor at the University of Chicago, spoke to the Session three Chicago participants, she explicated her work in violence prevention, trauma loss, and criminal justice reform in South Side Chicago. As she works to create sustainable peace and justice in local communities, she is constantly confronted with the call to love even those neighbors who resist, often violently, the healing she hopes to implement. The struggle to love these people is not a lack of effort, but a product of humanity's inability to foster perfect love without God. Yet we're called to do it anyway! Dr. Bocanegra suggests abiding with others, even in the most intense circumstances, as the active way in which we might respond.

In both my theological and ministerial work, I find myself preaching a Gospel of Love, quoting the familiar command, “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.” A tension between this faithful proclamation and lived action, however, seems particularly present in moments when I am confronted with people who seem to actively oppose the ever-flowing love of the Trinity. Where Christ challenges and teaches the mob to deter their stoning of the woman caught in adultery, I would be more inclined to angrily throw the stones back in the perpetrators’ direction. I don’t think I’m alone in my feelings of anger toward injustice. But the distorted reality is this: in our deepest search for Christ and our desire to imitate his behavior, we can betray the very ethic of love we seek to emulate. In loving the downtrodden, broken, and marginalized, we often forget to love their tormentors. How does one continue to love and see God in the face of the abuser, the exploiter, and the violent? It might seem evident that the mercy of the Good Samaritan is the answer to this question.
Helping someone who would commonly discriminate against his ethnic and religious identity, the Good Samaritan offers us an image of a love that reaches across social boundaries. But how might the story change if the man lying on the side of the road was the murderer of that Samaritan’s brother or the abuser of his daughter? The difficulty of maintaining our ethic of love is heightened when confronted with actions which are explicitly, unreservedly unloving. Hearkening back to Dr. Bocanegra, I remember her words about abiding. What this looks like is Job, destitute and broken, sitting on a dung heap with sores on his body. His three friends come to comfort him but do not initially recognize him. Their response is profound, “And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.” According to Dr. Bocanegra, the ones we find most difficult to love are the ones who are suffering the greatest. She suggests abiding with them through that suffering, rather than departing for more comfortable waters. The “white flight” that many Chicago church communities have experienced has left poor areas poorer and contributed to continued racial segregation from suburbs to city. What if church communities, rather than following their well-off members to the suburbs, stayed in their low-income city locations, ministering and abiding with the local people around them? The opportunity for neighboring might look a little different.

Dr. Bocanegra said that we aren’t out to save the world, nor do we have the ability to—Jesus already did that! What we can do is live His Gospel more fully in our local communities. Volunteering at a local homeless shelter, improving your community’s involvement in food banks, working with battered women, refugees, encouraging city participation by suburban churches, looking people in the eye when walking down the street, or pulling together collaborative teams of differently skilled people in one’s community to create new church outreach ministries. To think even more locally, we might reach out more often to the members of our own parishes, making sure every voice is heard, every pain consoled, offering services for those with special needs, and incorporating every strength towards thicker neighboring. What Dr. Bocanegra leaves us with is a reflection of action and abiding, a perspective on neighboring that is more than a sentimental feeling of love. It is, rather, a call to remain and change what we can within our local communities. Not everyone is going to be a social worker, but everyone is called to work socially towards greater love and reconciliation. Whatever occupation or vocation you find yourself in, you can still abide in Him as He does in us.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus writes, “Grace is given not to them who speak [their faith] but to those who live their faith.” There is action that is necessary for us to truly engage with and receive the grace of the Holy Spirit. This grace is granted in the active pursuit of loving justice and invites us into more radical and transformative love. A love spoken even from the lips of a dying man hung on a cross, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”
Fr. Stephanos Alexopoulos (CR Professor 2016)

Audio Course: Glimpses into the Unknown: Eastern Christianity and Its Spiritual Traditions. 12 Lectures in CD format (Bethesda, MD: Now You Know Media, 2017)


"Liturgical Renewal in the Church of Greece: Past; Present; Future?" in the Greek Orthodox Theological Review 61 (2016) 209-223 (published in 2018)

Dr. Bruce Beck (CR Professor 2009, 2013, 2016)

"Seeing as God Sees: Empathy and the Impartial Faith of Christ," solicited article for the TELOS project, which will be published in the resources blog, Hellenic College Holy Cross, 2018.


Fr. Calivas (CR Professor 2012, 2014)


Dr. George Demacopoulos (CR Professor 2018)


Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies 1 (2018) (Co-editor with Dr. Vera Shevzov)

Marilyn Gardner (CR Guest Presenter 2016, 2017)

"On Refugees, Fear, and Politics” Faith Conversations (podcast)

"Cultivating Christian-Muslim Friendships” Taking Route (podcast)


Dr. Aristotle Papanikolaou (CR Professor 2013)


Fr. Paul Tarazi (CR Professor 2010, 2014)

The Rise of Scripture

"Tarazi Tuesdays” The Ephesus School
This year, we encouraged our CrossRoad participants to think about the innumerable gifts God has given each of us—faith, talents, opportunities, relationships, and resources. Our proper response to God’s abundance in our lives is both gratitude and generosity. We challenged this year’s CrossRoaders to open the road for others to attend. Nearly a quarter of our 2018 participants generously responded to that challenge by becoming monthly donors. Will you join them in giving to CrossRoad? By supporting the Sophia Bambalis Scholarship Fund, you too can ensure that no applicant is turned away due to financial need.

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An Inspiring Legacy:  
How a Lifetime of Faith, Hope, and Love led to a CrossRoad Scholarship Endowment  
Karen Korellis Reuther

We are proud to announce the endowment made to CrossRoad at Hellenic College Holy Cross in honor and memory of my parents, George & Harriet Korellis: two first generation Greek Americans who loved their Greek Orthodox church and put that love into lifelong action. With this endowment their support will continue for generations to come. When deciding where to best place this gift, my husband Dieter said, “With all the pressures and pull of Social Media it’s even more important to give our kids face-to-face experiences.” This led us to CrossRoad.

Both Harriet and George like many immigrant families had extremely humble beginnings. George grew up in Hammond, Indiana, just south of Chicago, and was a lifelong member of St. Demetrios there. Growing up his parents were caretakers of the church. His mom Calliope would clean, and his dad Peter would stoke the furnace with coal for heat. They would have everything ready for services. As a young boy George often rode his bike to the church on bitter cold mornings to fuel the furnace alone before going to school. The congregation was small then, and his mom knew everyone by name. On each person’s namesday she would present them with a flower. In the 1970s she presented her handmade handkerchiefs and silver dollars to the children who recited the prayers on Friday nights during Lent. She would always sit in the back row of the church and greet any new person to make them feel welcome, something George would continue throughout his life. He served for many years on the church board and was President during the time of the church’s 40th anniversary. He was always the first person to welcome new members to the church with a smile and a hug, special moments that many people remind us of today. His devotion to his church remained strong until the time he passed during the bitter cold winter of 2015.

Harriet was born and raised on Chicago’s northside. She was a passionate and lifelong Cubs fan. Her fondest memories as a child were spending afternoons at Wrigley Field watching her beloved team. She had a special love for dance and design, was a great student, athlete, a wonderful cook and an exceptional baker. Harriet was ahead of her time. A strong mind for business, a sense of fashion, and an arm that could pitch a mean fast ball. She moved to Hammond, Indiana when she was 21 years old, and met George. In church, of course. They became the first couple to marry in the new St. Demetrios church edifice, which, by the way, had a boiler that no longer needed to be stoked. Harriet was active in the Philoptochos, and chaired their successful fashion show fundraiser for many years.

Together they were the founders of Korellis Roofing, Inc. which they started in 1960 out of their humble Hammond home. A dream come true for George, to start his own business as a first-generation American. Always the strong partner, Harriet was at his side as the business grew and grew. They loved their business, their customers and their employees for over 50 years.
In 2014 George was named Businessman of the Year by the Lake Shore Chamber of Commerce. He started the scholarship fund for the Northwestern Indiana Roofing Contractor's Association, where to date over 150 scholarships have been awarded.

For so many reasons my parents would love CrossRoad. Building connections, the spirit of active practice, and servant leadership were how they both lived their lives, helping those who need a shoulder to stand on and bringing our children closer to the church. More importantly Crossroad brings our church closer to our children through understanding, communication and activity. If CrossRoad had existed when my parents were of age, they would have been the first to sign up, and praying for just a little help to do it.

George P. Korellis / June 8, 1928–February 21, 2015
Harriet G. Korellis / April 23, 1928–June 24, 2017

Karen Korellis Reuther, daughter of George and Harriet Korellis, and her husband Dieter connecting with CrossRoaders this summer.
Marianna Bannon  
2004
Pani Marianna and her husband Fr. Jonathan live in Rockford, IL with their three-year-old Adrian! Pani Marianna is currently running the AP Physics program at the gifted academy for Rockford Public Schools. Leaving CrossRoad, Pani Marianna solidified her decision to teach or engineer and decided to teach in Albania one day through OCMC. While she has not journeyed abroad for missions, she recognizes that her work as a teacher in an urban district is a type of missions that serves and witnesses to her own local community every single day.

Nellie Benton  
2019 Session 3
Nellie is currently in Bosnia-Herzegovina as an exchange student for her senior year of high school. Her host mom here is Muslim and living together has given her many opportunities to learn about each other’s beliefs, religious or not. Last weekend Nellie went to church for the first time since being here and her host mom ended up joining her. Nellie assumed that Muslims here would be so against Christianity because of the war, but it’s the opposite. After the war, Catholics, Orthodox, and Muslims all still live in Sarajevo, so they’ve figured out how to learn from each other.

Pres. Nikola Hasiakos  
2004
Pres. Nikola and Fr. Panayiotis moved to Chicago last Christmas to enter a life of ordained ministry with their two children. The days are long and the years are short with children, and she is trying to thank God through the coddles, the messes, the giggles, and the hard lessons.

Alexandra Kroll  
June 2013
Alexandra moved to Minnesota, the land of “hot dishes” where people exclaim “oof!” Moving away from her Chicago family and friends and beginning her career as a cardiac nurse, Alexandra is constantly reminded that God’s plan is always better than her own and that with Him all things are possible. Grappling with “adulting” and the working life, Alexandra is challenged daily to be in the present moment and thank God for all things.

Emmanuel and Melissa Maginas  
June 6 & July 2009
Emmanuel ("Manoli") Maginas (June 2009) graduated from Holy Cross School of Theology in May 2018. On August 19, at St. George Cathedral in Wichita, Kansas, Manoli was crowned in marriage with his best friend from their Hellenic College days, Melissa Likiardopoulos (July 2009). Beginning this fall, Emmanuel is the pastoral assistant at Holy Cross Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Melissa, in between unpacking boxes and making their new house into a true home, is naming an Orthodox family in the area. If there’s one thing they’ve learned, it’s that Fr. Tom Hopko’s words are true: "That is what it is; work and effort here, rest there!"

Evangelia Pagones  
June 2011
Evangelia continues to be thankful for how the CrossRoad institution and experience has touched her life as well of her siblings, cousins, and friends. In her third year as an orchestra teacher in the Chicago suburbs, Evangelia is involved with music at her parish and tries to read lots of books and listen to plenty of podcasts to keep deepening her faith in Christ and relationships with others. Glory to Him for all things!

Kendra Standish  
Session 3 2016
Kendra is in the first semester of college at the University of Arizona and loving it! She is reminded every day of how God surrounds us with blessings and joy, and that His plan is beyond anything she can imagine. Even though four years in college sounds like an incredibly long time right now, she is working on taking it one day at a time. She knows that it will be over before she knows it, and that God will guide her path as long as she "seeks first the Kingdom!"

Dorothea Staurusky  
June 2010
This summer, Dorothea started a one-year Hospital Administration Residency at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. She is working alongside the chief officers of the health system and rotating throughout the hospital to learn healthcare administration from all levels. She has found her vocation and purpose in her work in this role and truly feels Christ's presence in the hospital and in the work she is doing each day. This job is just for a year, so she will need a new job in August—if you know of any openings, let her know!

Elise Todd  
July 2017
Elise started college at the University of Northern Colorado to study musical theatre. She is reminded daily of the image of Christ that is found in other people as she performs and works with them on the stage. Sometimes it's hard to find Christ in the modern entertainment industry but He is there. You just have to look very closely.

Theodora Veronis  
July 2017
Theodora graduated high school and is now taking a gap year of service before going to college! She spent the summer at Project Mexico as a three month intern. In the fall she will be going to Uganda and Kenya to teach English at a school for 2 months. In the spring she will be going to Albania to teach English as well, and afterward she will be in Greece to help at a Roma home for boys and soup kitchen for several months. Through the lectures and lessons learned at CrossRoad she was inspired to make some of these decisions for a year off from the traditional route of school.
STAFF UPDATES

Fr. Nicholas Belcher
2005—2008
After twelve years at HCHC, Fr. Nick moved to New Jersey to work as an assistant to His Eminence Metropolitans Joseph of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. Fr. Nick has found ways to stay involved in youth and young adult ministry—serving as a session priest at Antiochian Village, speaking at numerous retreats, and overseeing the Archdiocese’s seminarians including teaching them liturgy at St. Vladimir’s. He hopes he can come back to help at CrossRoad sometime in the near future.

Dan Belonick
2009—2010
Dan now serves as Director of Counseling for LiveWell, supporting both persons newly diagnosed with dementia and their families. He is reminded often of Christ’s call to make manifest His presence upon and in every moment in which we find ourselves, as an ongoing renewal of our vocation, meeting our neighbor face to face, just where they are.

Alexandra Drechsler
June 2013 Alum, 2018 Staff
Alexandra is serving Christ and the poor in Kansas City, MO. She is doing a yearlong VISTA Americorps internship with Reconciliation Services, an organization connected to the Orthodox Church and working for racial and economic reconciliation. RS just opened a new “Donate-What-You-Can” café where rich and poor literally break bread together. Serving meals there, Alexandra’s eyes are being opened to the many things that are not reconcilable on this side of the Kingdom. When it’s grey and unclear, we must trust that with faith all will be well. She is striving, moment by moment, to meet God in the present.

Anna Kallis
2005 Alum, 2011—2014 & 2018 Staff
This past summer, Anna had the absolute joy of being back on the CrossRoad leadership team as she co-directed the inaugural session of CrossRoad in Chicago. Being back involved in this capacity was not only an enriching and fulfilling professional work opportunity, but it allowed her to personally dive back into the timeless lessons of vocation. As Anna was pregnant with her first baby over the summer, she found this re-immersion in the exploration of vocation so helpful as she sets out to navigate this new phase of her own vocation—motherhood. She is both challenged and excited to figure out how to stay active in her professional life while seeking to be the best mother she can be to her little boy. She is grateful for the critical framework CrossRoad has given her to help her along this journey! And this brings us to the most exciting part of this update—Anna and Fr. Kosmas (also CR alumnus and former staff member) are overjoyed to share the birth of their first child, Jonah Michael Kallis, born December 10th! They are so grateful for this beautiful sweet boy and Jonah already can’t wait for CrossRoad 2036!

Mary Long
2004—2011
Mary continues to live in Austin and work full time in the health and fitness industry. She is involved in the young professionals ministry at her local parish and a member of the Archdiocese’s women’s Byzantine choir. She had the joy to see several CrossRoad alumni at a conference in Denver this August (see photo). She sends love to all the CR family!

Nicolas Manuel
2007 Staff
Greetings lovely CrossRoadians! This year has been a great blessing indeed! Nick is in the last year of his studies at HCHC. This upcoming May, he will, God willing, graduate with his MDiv from this amazing place and begin his service in Christ’s Holy Vineyard. May God bless you all and give you strength as you continue your journey in becoming your true authentic self!

Demitra Minotos (Lalli)
June 2009 Alum, 2013 Staff
Demitra is eternally grateful for her CrossRoad experiences as both a participant (2009) and a staff member (2013). She is currently living in New Orleans with her husband, Paul. She works full time as a Neonatal ICU nurse while Paul is in medical school. Following the Lord’s will in complete surrender has been the most challenging yet the most rewarding. Remembering the words of Fr. Tom Hopko, of blessed memory, “Being faithful where we are is the basic sign that we will God’s will for our lives. The struggle to ‘blossom where we are planted,’ as the saying goes, is the way to discern God’s presence and power in our lives, to hear His voice, to accomplish His purposes, to share His holiness...we must go to God Himself and say with a pure heart: Thy will be done! And He will see that we find our vocation and calling in life, and become the saints that He has willed us to be from the beginning.”

Nick and Amanda Lionas
2006 Alum, 2012 Staff
Nick and Amanda were excited to welcome their second child, Eleni, in May. Scotty is now four and living pre-school. In August 2018, Nick started as the Youth and Young Adult Director at Assumption Greek Orthodox Church in St. Clair Shores, Michigan. Amanda was promoted to Foster Care Supervisor, helping children and families in Detroit, Michigan.

Sarah Livick-Moses
2016 & 2019
Sarah Livick-Moses is now working as the Pastoral Assistant for St. George Antiochian Church in West Roxbury, MA. She continues to study theology in her free time and is hoping to start doctoral work in the near future!
UPCOMING EVENTS

CROSSROAD ALUMNI RETREAT
APRIL 12-14, 2019 (Boston, MA)

SAVE THE DATE to join us and your fellow alumni for a rejuvenating weekend of prayer, fellowship, and conversation!

CROSSROAD 2019
SESSION 1: JUNE 15–25, 2019 (Boston, MA)
SESSION 2: JULY 2–12, 2019 (Boston, MA)
SESSION 3: JULY 20–30, 2019 (Chicago, IL)