



ST VLADIMIR'S
ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ALUMNI AROUND THE WORLD



Jesse Brandow (SVOTS' class of '13) and Juanita Pascual are **Orthodox Christian Missionary Center (OCMC) missionaries living in the city of Huehue in western Guatemala**, under His Eminence Athenagoras, the Metropolitan of Mexico and Central America.

Together (married since 2019), they provide vital ministry to the Church as Orthodoxy continues its rapid growth in Central America, particularly among indigenous communities. Jesse began full-time mission work in Central America in 2015, **teaching lay Orthodox leaders as well as seminarians and developing catechetical materials for the Church.** Fluent in Spanish, **Jesse recently completed a full calendar of saints' lives, the most important variable hymns (mostly the *apolytikia*), and lectionary readings in Spanish, all published by the Metropolis of Mexico and Central America.**



**PUBLISHING
RESOURCES IN
SPANISH FOR
CONVERTS AND
CATECHUMENS**

“There was a phrase at St Vladimir’s repeated frequently when I was attending: **We do a ‘critical appropriation of the Tradition.’ The term described a thoughtful, reflective approach to how we receive Orthodox Tradition and carry that out in ministry today.** I’ve benefitted in my ministry from this emphasis.

“Central America is very different from the States and also very different from where the Tradition was formed around the Mediterranean. How can we apply all of that in a way that makes sense to people in Central America, many of whom are from indigenous people groups including Maya? **Through God’s grace we will be able to continue to produce material to build up the faithful in Central America.”**



**JESSE
BRANDOW**

**OCMC MISSIONARY TO
CENTRAL AMERICA**

Father Christopher Moore was a student leader of the Seminary's St Innocent Mission Society when he and his wife, Mat. Jennifer, lived on campus. Not long after Fr Christopher graduated in 2018, they flew to Korea, where they are now **Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) missionaries serving at the St Dionysios of Zakynthos Orthodox Church in Ulsan.**

They came to St Vladimir's with the intention of taking a formative experience into the mission field.

"A 'non-quantifiable asset' to going to St Vladimir's was community life—it was *really, really valuable*," said Mat. Jennifer. "In daily services you experience the rhythm of the cycle of the Church year."



Father Christopher added, "Having the chance to live in that vibrant Orthodox community—the balance of students and faculty from different jurisdictions, Eastern and Oriental, allowed me to broaden my perspective a lot about Orthodoxy in the world, its practices and teachings. And my pastoral theology classes about cross-cultural settings prepared us for this role of ministering across cultures."

The Moores spent their first term studying the Korean language, leading the parish, and making huge adjustments when the first Covid cases emerged in Korea in February of 2020.

The parish of St Dionysios is a diverse blend of Koreans and expats from countries around the world who are working at the famous Ulsan shipyards or other Korean businesses.



**FR CHRISTOPHER
MOORE**

**OCMC MISSIONARY TO
KOREA**

Since September 2019, Dn Marek Simon has served as the executive director of Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF)—the official college ministry for all twelve jurisdictions of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America.

He's tackling new opportunities to expand OCF's ministry to Orthodox Christians in college.

"There is a demand from students who may not have an OCF chapter on campus. They are seeking ways to stay connected to the Church and other students, so over the past year we have probably had close to 200 students engaged in weekly, small-group gatherings that are virtual, and we've seen traction here in addition to the local OCF gatherings on campuses."

Deacon Marek has been involved in youth and campus ministry for many years since graduating from St Vladimir's Seminary in 2001.

"I consider my time at St Vladimir's as three of the most formative years of my life. The education and mentorship I received were excellent, and living in the seminary community helped guide my understanding of what it means to be the Church."



~200

STUDENTS
ENGAGED
IN WEEKLY
GATHERINGS



**DN MAREK
SIMON**

OCF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
USA

Father Theodor, a 2015 graduate of St Vladimir's, and Mat. Hanne Svane serve in Bergen, Norway. In Norway, where Lutheranism was until recently the state religion, Orthodox Christianity is often viewed as something foreign.

But already in his relatively short priestly ministry in his native country, Fr Theodor is making history for the Orthodox Church there: **he is the first-ever Orthodox chaplain in the Norwegian Navy.**

He and Mat. Hanne are also hard at work at The Annunciation of the Holy Virgin Mary Orthodox Parish, where Fr Theodor says they are beginning to see God's hand at work in their ministry, despite—or perhaps even because of—the pandemic.

"People are coming to our church—they tell us, 'I used to be agnostic. I used to be an atheist. **Now I'm starting to believe in God. What do I do—where do I go from here?**' There have been challenges, and yet on Sunday we're receiving 6 catechumens. By Christmas we'll have almost 10 catechumens! Things are moving in a good direction."

The Svanes say they are drawing from everything they learned from their "life-changing" experience at St Vladimir's in their ministry in Norway.



"It provided our point of reference: how to serve the services, how to understand the liturgy and theology of the Church, how to be the universal and international Orthodox Church with a sense of mission and purpose, how to engage the world. **Saint Vladimir's is a place where you will acquire understanding and focus regarding our mission as Orthodox Christians.** As Fr Chad would say, we want to 'go deep in order to make an impact.'"



**ORTHODOX
CHAPLAIN
IN THE
NORWEGIAN
ARMED
FORCES**

**FR THEODOR
SVANE**

**CHAPLAIN IN THE
NORWEGIAN NAVY
NORWAY**



Hollie Benton (SVOTS' class of 1999) has served as executive director of the Orthodox Christian Leadership Initiative (OCLI) since September of 2019. Her time at Seminary was uniquely life-changing—she was baptized at the Seminary's Three Hierarchs Chapel and met her future husband, fellow graduate Rich Benton, at St Vladimir's!

“At St Vladimir's, there is a lot of emphasis on forming leadership. We are all called to be servants of God—not just the priest who is our ‘stand-in servant.’ We have a duty to the greatest commandments—loving God and neighbor. Christian leadership is not about developing personal influence and authority; it's about submitting to the ONE Leader.”



Just this past September, Hollie spearheaded another successful National Orthodox Advanced Leadership Conference hosted by OCLI and St Vladimir's, bringing together emerging and seasoned leaders from across North America—clergy and laity, men and women, younger and older—for the fifth year running!



**HOLLIE
BENTON**
OCLI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
USA

*There are SVOTS alumni in 47 countries around the world.

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