



**OCAMPR**  
Orthodox Christian Association of  
Medicine, Psychology, *and* Religion

## **Care in a COVID Era: Unity & Truth in Uncertain Times**

OCAMPR Annual Conference, November 4-6, 2021

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Phoenix, AZ and online

[www.ocampr.org](http://www.ocampr.org)

### **Session 1: Workshops**

#### *1.1 Diaconal Post-COVID Rescue Response*

Rev. Deacon Salvatore Fazio

Demetra Velisarios Jaquet, MDiv, DMin

Helen Creticos Theodoropoulos, MTS, MA, PhD

**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020 and still permeates the world has revealed gaps in the ministry of our Church to those who are stressed, frightened, sick, grieving, and suffering. Throughout the crisis, both mental and spiritual health suffered and continue to be at risk. These pastoral needs are not new, but the pandemic enabled us to see more clearly what these unmet needs are, and gives us the opportunity to reflect on the ways we can seek out and serve those in need. There are many lost sheep who cannot find their way back to the Church. We know that we are not the ones who save the lost; only Christ is Savior. However, we also know that He works through us, His Body, the community of the faithful, His Holy Church, as we are empowered and guided by the grace of His Holy Spirit. This is the pastoral ministry of Christ reaching through His people to the whole world, and can be likened to the search and rescue teams that go out in dangerous and desperate conditions to rescue the lost, injured and needy. Within that model of the search and rescue team, the ordained diaconate—male and female—has a clear and crucial ministry. This panel and workshop will examine the current needs and the way in which the ministry of the diaconate can have a critical

role in the work of Christ, as it has since the first seven deacons were ordained. The panel will briefly reflect on the history, and current roles and responsibilities of the diaconate today. Then, through our workshop together, we invite all participants to share with us a vision of what the full ministry of the diaconate can be.

**Bio:** Dr. Demetra Velisarios Jaquet, M.Div., D.Min., is a CPE Training Supervisor and Spiritual Director, and a retired pastoral counselor, hospice and hospital chaplain, and professor of Religious Studies. She taught in the Benedictine Spiritual Formation Program of Benet Hill Monastery, Colorado Springs, Colorado, and serves on the Board of Spiritual Directors of Colorado (SDCO). Her professional certifications include the American Association of Pastoral Counselors (AAPC), the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP), and the Center for Spiritual Care and Pastoral Formation (CSCPF). She is a past president of OCAMPR and serves on the advisory boards of OCAMPR, AXIA Women, and the St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess. She currently teaches Centering Prayer at HopeWest Hospice, Grand Junction, CO, and maintains a small private practice in Spiritual Direction. She is a member of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, Grand Junction.

**Bio:** Dr. Helen Creticos Theodoropoulos, MTS, MA, PhD, is a lifelong member of Saints Peter and Paul Greek Orthodox Church in Glenview, IL and has been active in theological education in various ways for many years. Adjunct professor at St. Sava Serbian Orthodox School of Theology in Libertyville, IL since 1999, teaching Patristics, Dr. Theodoropoulos also has taught for several years as Lecturer at the University of St. Mary of the Lake/ Mundelein Seminary (Roman Catholic), at Loyola University Chicago, and at Seabury-Western Theological School (Episcopal). She leads adult bible studies at two Orthodox Churches, and co-leads the bimonthly adult education class at SS Peter and Paul Greek Orthodox Church. Areas of focus in her work are Orthodox doctrine and theology, the study of the Church Fathers, and Christian spirituality. She serves on the board of the St. Phoebe Center for the Deaconess, and as Secretary of the Orthodox Theological Society in America.

**Bio:** Reverend Deacon Salvatore Fazio, BS in electrical engineering, was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on December 20, 2009. He is a Master Electrician and Licensed Professional Engineer in several states. In his secular career, Dn. Sal is a principal consultant at Electrical Systems Engineering, Inc. Dn. Sal, a Master in Martial Arts, and his wife, Diakonissa Angela, work

together in their business Christian Martial Fitness. Their mission is to encourage others to train hard, stay prayerful, and live healthy. Since 2017, Dn. Sal has been the Diaconate Program Director of Outreach for Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (HCHC) in Brookline, MA. He is a guest speaker, organizer, and supporter of diaconate retreats and events to strengthen diaconate fellowship in communities throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Deacon Sal serves at Holy Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church in Austin, TX.

1.2 *A Christian Ending to Our Lives: An Exploration of Death Anxiety and the COVID-19 Pandemic Within Orthodox Christianity*  
Fr. Ignatius Warren, MA, PhD (cand)

**Abstract:** The COVID-19 pandemic has activated an increase in anxiety throughout the world. In addition to a heavy death toll, containment efforts have led to social disruption and economic devastation which, combined with disagreements regarding mask mandates and vaccination, have split society along ideological lines. Terror management theory (TMT), an experimental approach to the study of existentialism, proposes that much of human behavior can be understood via death anxiety. Therefore, TMT is well positioned to explain many aspects of the behavioral and emotional response to the pandemic. Although an awareness of mortality is present in various philosophical and religious traditions, the Orthodox Church cultivates an awareness of death that is noteworthy in comparison to other Christian groups. Orthodox Christians are exposed to these concepts through the writings of the saints, repeated prayer for the departed and for a peaceful end of one's life, a uniquely sober funeral service, and the insistence on the centrality of the Resurrection. This presentation will explore the relationship between death anxiety and the range of human responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, the unique contribution that faith and, specifically, Orthodox Christianity can make during this season, and will discuss ways in which research within terror management theory may inform our response, resilience, and efforts at unification.

**Bio:** The Reverend Ignatius Jeffrey Warren is a priest of the Antiochian Archdiocese and a graduate of St. Vladimir's Seminary. He served at St. George Cathedral in Wichita, KS, where he completed an MA in Clinical Psychology at Wichita State University. Fr. Ignatius is currently a PhD student in Clinical

Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. He sees clients at Vanguard University Counseling Center in Costa Mesa, CA.

Title: A Christian Ending to Our Lives: An Exploration of Death Anxiety and the COVID-19 Pandemic Within Orthodox Christianity

### 1.3 (Virtual) *Treating Children and Adolescents during the Pandemic*

Lila Amirali, MD

Objectives:

- describing the effects of COVID19 pandemic to the mental health of children and adolescents
- describing the experience of caring for COVID19 positive children and adolescents requiring psychiatric hospitalization
- sharing some personal reflections from the point of view of an Orthodox Christian psychiatrist

**Abstract:** The COVID19 pandemic had and continues to have a profound effect on the mental health of children and adolescents. Anxiety disorders and eating disorders increased significantly. The isolation and the social distancing affected the normal social development of our youth.

My hospital Center, the University Hospital Center Sainte-Justine (CHUSJ), a tertiary care academic center and one of the largest mother-child hospitals in North America, became the designated establishment for COVID19 positive children and adolescents in the province of Quebec. We created a psychiatric unit specifically for COVID19 positive children and adolescents that required significant adaptations and change of protocols and procedures. The pandemic took us outside of our comfort zone and obliged us to question our practices. As a result some of our adaptations are quickly becoming our “new normal” and they will most likely continue to be part of our post-pandemic reality. COVID19 has touched each and everyone of us in different ways. As an orthodox Christian psychiatrist I had the opportunity to work with COVID19 positive children and adolescents who needed psychiatric care as well as with patients and families affected by the pandemic and its consequences (i.e. social isolation and social distancing). In closing I will offer a few personal reflections on the process of our collective bereavement as I still today see it in my practice.

**Bio:** Dr Amirali is a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Chief of the Department of Psychiatry at CHU Sainte-Justine and Associate Professor at the Université de Montréal. She obtained her Masters of Management (International Masters

on Health Leadership) from McGill University in 2014. She is working in the inpatient service of the CHU Sainte-Justine and in research at the Research Centre of the CHU Sainte-Justine and at the Research Institute of the MUHC. Dr Amirali is the Chair of the Child and Adolescent Specialty Committee of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and the Vice-Chair of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (CACAP). She is also the President of the Association of Child and Adolescent Psychiatrists of Quebec (AQPEA)

### **Special Session: “Covid and the Church” Panel (Hybrid: In-Person and Virtual)**

Moderator: Dr. Gayle Woloschak, PhD  
Hermina Nedelescu, PhD  
Cheryl Johnson, MD  
Chris Mathews, MD, MSPH  
Fr. Dr. Anthony Roeber, PhD

**Abstract:** The goal of this workshop is to provide information and discussion on how the Church handles and continues to handle the COVID pandemic. Medical and theological issues will be reflected upon. Speakers have been invited to discuss the biology of the virus, medical treatments, ethical perspectives, and the Church context. It is expected that each of the presenters will talk for 10 min and then devote the rest of the time of the workshop to open discussion and comments.

### **Session 2: Workshops**

#### *2.1 Healing of the Person from Theological & Psychological Perspectives: Are they Compatible?*

Steven-John M. Harris, PhD  
Very Reverend Robert Isaac Skidmore, MDiv, PhD

**Abstract:** “OCAMPR exists to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and promote Christian fellowship among healing professionals in medicine, psychology, and religion,” according to its mission statement. And now, with the welcomed development of the Assembly of Orthodox Canonical Bishops of the United States of America explicitly making mental health a priority, Orthodoxy is now engaged in an important dialectic. Explicitly engaging this focus on mental

health brings many challenges. While collaboration between clinicians and clergy seems to be welcomed, finding a working relationship can be, and often is, fraught with tensions, issues, and struggle—or worse, non-existent.

This presentation will begin with a brief review of the similarities and distinctions between Church dogma and the discipline of psychotherapy. First, relevant elements of theology, anthropology, ontology, and ideology will be briefly analyzed. The presentation will then address, from both perspectives the goals, views of science, values, and perceived roles of clergy/spiritual fathers and psychotherapists. After this review, the presenters, a psychologist, and a priest who is also a therapist, will guide participants with focused questions in a dialogue to explore this nascent territory. The goal of this dialogue will be to move toward an explicit mapping out of these not yet well-defined domains and how the roles might collaborate for the benefit of parishioners with mental health needs. Such cooperation implies benefits for both clergy and psychotherapists. The questions to be used will center around: (1) Roles of priest/spiritual father and psychotherapist; (2) Diagnoses, both spiritual and psychological; (3) Can a potential “turf war” turn into collaboration that includes both communication and boundaries? and; (4) What can each discipline teach the other about the complexity of the person? This discussion is seen as a beginning of an *explicit conversation* about how clergy and psychotherapists might find compatibility, collaboration, and appreciation for their perspective roles, and perhaps growth within those roles.

**Bio:** Steven-John M. Harris. PhD in Psychology, United States International University, Certificate in Jungian (American Institute) and Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (Newport Psychoanalytic Institute). Works in Private Practice and as an author of works on psychology and faith. Attends Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos Serbian Orthodox Church, Serbian Orthodox Church, Western North American Diocese.

**Bio:** Very Reverend Robert Isaac Skidmore. MDiv, St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary, PhD in Depth Psychology, Pacifica Graduate Institute. Works as a priest at Archangel Orthodox Church of the Orthodox Church of America, Ashland, OR, and is in Private Practice as a Licensed Professional Counselor. he also writes on issues regarding the clergy, psychology, and on matters of cultural and social concerns.

*2.2 EMDR: Treating Trauma and being Trauma-Informed as an Orthodox Christian: Dean Theophilos, MA, LCPC, CRADC*

**Abstract:** This workshop will offer a brief overview of EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) Therapy and how it treats those struggling with PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder) and CPTSD (Complex Post-traumatic stress disorder). The workshop will also offer basic skills and concepts that care professionals can use to be more trauma-informed when working with their clients. Finally, the workshop will discuss how Orthodox Christian teachings of healing parallel the restoring and integrative work done in the treatment of trauma.

**Bio:** Dean is a mental health therapist at the Mansio Center, a private practice in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. He has been working in the mental health field since 2012 and is a licensed mental health counselor in both Illinois and Minnesota. Dean is also a licensed and certified alcohol and drug counselor and has clinical experience in both Christian-based and secular addiction treatment centers. He is also an EMDR trained therapist specializing in the treatment of addiction and PTSD. He is a member of Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church in Westchester, Illinois.

*2.3 (Virtual) Pathway to Peace*

Fr. Andrew Harmon, Cindy George, BSN, MA, Nancy Brown, MA

**Abstract:** The Serenity Prayer, written by Reinhold Niebuhr and popularized by Alcoholics Anonymous, reminds us of our need to accept “hardship as the pathway to peace.” The Orthodox tradition has long advised that deification is not an easy nor pain-free process. It involves diligence, perseverance, and death to self. But if we expect to fully and effectively witness the Gospel to others, it is essential that we fully appreciate our own brokenness, our own woundedness. We must face the truth about ourselves, our memories, our grief, our suffering. Not merely for the purpose of cleansing and purification, but to bring to light distorted views we may have of God, expose the roots of those views, and heal those wounds that have kept us from the love of God and of others.

As Father Thomas Hopko of blessed memory vehemently declares, the only way we can truly experience God’s love is to be fully, completely, and unconditionally loved by another. To that end, St Matthew Parish in North

Royalton, Ohio has developed and implemented an Orthodox 12-step recovery program called “Pathway to Peace” (PTP), a gathering place for Orthodox Christians to meet for healthy spiritual fellowship and support in seeking practical solutions for their problems; a place for those who are broken from hurt, hang-ups, or habits.

**Bio:** The panel discussion for this presentation will be the priest of St Matthew Parish, Father Andrew Harmon who will speak of the Church as Hospital and the ways that Pathway to Peace serves that endeavor. The second presenter will be Cindy George, a retired RN, parishioner of St Matthew, member of PTP, and a person with a long history of 12-step work. She will speak of the creation and implementation of PTP along with a recent grant given to enable PTP to be utilized in other churches who desire this program. The third panelist, Nancy Brown, is an Orthodox member of PTP from Bella Vista, Arkansas, retired psychotherapist and recovering alcoholic. She will discuss accessing PTP during the lockdown, and the unique benefits she has received and sees others receiving from this meeting relative to 12-Step work and therapy.

**Friday Night Dinner Speaker:** During his session, *The Way of the Warrior Saint*, Fr. Christopher Salamy will challenge and debunk the modern world’s temptation to find success by taking the easy road. Though modern man looks for quick fixes and magic pills, doing things the easy way leaves human beings feeling anxious, distraught and unfulfilled. Based on the archetype of the Christ story, we learn that to become the fullest version of ourselves requires that we actually confront the monsters in our lives and conquer them through self sacrifice. We call that Crucifixional Living. In the COVID age, this is needed more than ever.

**Bio:** Fr. Chris Salamy, Pastor, St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church  
BA Loyola Marymount University 1995  
MDiv Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology 1998  
DMin Pittsburgh Theological Seminary 2012

### **Session 3: Workshops / Papers**

3.1 *The Mental Health Task Force: Identifying and Responding to the Needs of the Church:* Sangeetha Thomas, MS, LPC Associate (supervised by Sarah Walters, LPC-S)



**Abstract:** As the prevalence of mental health concerns in the US has increased in recent years, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become imperative that the Orthodox Church take this general population trend into consideration for ministry and pastoral care. The Mental Health Task Force of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops created and distributed a Mental Health Needs Assessment survey to properly identify the mental health needs of Orthodox Christians in the US. This Needs Assessment was conducted in the form of a self-report survey designed for clergy and laity participants. Over 1600 responses were collected between April to August 2021 that represented a majority of the Orthodox Christian jurisdictions in the US. Key findings from this survey indicate that, although both clergy and laity are willing and interested to utilize both pastoral and clinical mental health care, there are also notable challenges to addressing mental health within the context of the church community. The predominant barriers identified in this survey include: accessibility to clinical and/or pastoral care, lack of adequate and/or consistent clergy training, challenges to safety and trust, confusion regarding the integration of spirituality and mental health, stigma, and unclear boundaries between pastoral and clinical care. The results of this study indicate specific, needs-based opportunities for the further development of resources and programs to support the continued care of Orthodox Christian faithful.

**Bio:** Sangeetha Thomas, MS, is a Licensed Professional Counselor Associate under the supervision of Sarah Walters, LPC-S, and currently works as the Programs Coordinator for the Mental Health Task Force of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops. She has been providing outpatient therapy at Hill Country Bible Church in Austin, Texas since 2019 and specializes in the areas of spirituality, trauma, suicide prevention, and multicultural identity. She also serves in the Department of Counseling for the Indian (Malankara) Orthodox Church, Diocese of South-West America.

*3.2 Learning to See in Covid (and non-Covid) Hospital Rooms - A Chaplain Resident's Perspective: Kelli Green Ward, MDiv*

**Abstract:** In this presentation, I hope to share stories from the height of the Covid surge in our hospital and explore expressions of grief and hope in the hymns of St Romanos the Melodist. As witnesses to several deaths each day, patient isolation, family separation, anxiety and fear among staff members,

and much more, chaplains have had to find creative ways to attend to abundant spiritual distress in this time. We have not been able to see peoples' whole faces. We have not been able to touch or be physically close to each other. We have not been able to hold hands as we pray. We have accompanied families and friends to patient rooms, where they had only 30 minutes of approved visitation to say goodbye to their dying loved one, if they were able to be there at all. These experiences of loss and grief have affected and will continue to affect countless loved ones along with overwhelmed, exhausted hospital staff. In the hymns of St. Romanos, we hear lamenting voices and cries of sorrow along with assurances of comfort and hope of the Resurrection. These hymns as articulations of Scripture offer us a lens through which to see experiences of loss. I hope to explore these hymns and highlight creative ways spiritual caregivers facilitate healing in this time.

**Bio:** My name is Kelli Ward (formerly Kelli Green). I graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree in May 2020, and I had the privilege of serving as a chaplain resident at Sharp Memorial Medical Campus in San Diego, CA this year (2020-2021). I will continue to learn and serve as a hospice chaplain and per-diem hospital chaplain this fall. My husband and I were preparing to enter the Church with Fr. Peter Baktis at Mother of God Orthodox Church in Princeton in 2019-2020, and glory to God, we were able to be chrismated on May 1, 2021 at St. John of Damascus Orthodox Church (OCA) in Poway, CA with Fr. Michael Anderson.

**3.3 Virtual Paper Presentations:**  
*The Role of Mystery in COVID Care*  
Fr. Joshua Genig, MDiv, PhD

**Abstract:** This paper will explore the fundamental role of mystery in the care of patients suffering from COVID-19. Specific attention will be paid to the disparity between modern and post-modern approaches to mystery and how medical instruction and care has often been conducted in the vein of the former. However, with post-moderns now being trained as medical clinicians and serving on the frontlines of this pandemic, there is an opportunity to return to a more ancient manner of understanding humanity, one which places mystery on equal footing with chemistry, and this is especially important in the wake of COVID-19.

**Bio:** I received my BA in Religious Studies from Concordia University in Ann Arbor, MI; my MDiv in Pastoral and Systematic Theology from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN; and my PhD in Systematic Theology from the University of St. Andrews, Scotland. In addition to my academic work, I have completed five units of CPE (residency + internship) at the University of Michigan Medical Center. I have published numerous peer-reviewed journal articles and monographs, as well as popular papers and presentations, on topics ranging from theology to spirituality to medicine/spiritual care. Currently, I serve as Rector of St. Innocent of Irkutsk Russian Orthodox Church (MP) in Redford, MI, Dean of the Central States Deanery, and Staff Chaplain at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor, MI.

*The Paranoia of a Vaccinated Body (of Christ)*  
Alex Holguin, PhD (candidate)

**Abstract:** The violent intrusion of coronavirus onto the global public was just as much a psychological phenomenon as it was a physical event. One could simply refer to the seemingly infinite reports of the anxiety of becoming a vector for viral transmission to loved ones, the submission (or lack thereof) to public health authorities as evidenced by the signifier of the mask, and a general sense of loneliness connecting the move of communities to now virtual ways of doing work, school, and church as evidence to the range of the psychological impact, but this starting point would forfeit a much-needed understanding of how the virus affects the ego, desire, and how one cares for the 'other' through the unique rhetoric of vaccine hesitancy. The confrontation with COVID-19 offered an imagination of how ones biological and civic mortality represented a way of life that was disturbed by an indescribable, yet discernible, traumatic force. In the wake of this trauma, subjects sought to naturalize the seemingly nature-defying virus with various discourses designed to delegitimize the severity of the impact that faced them. These discourses were arbitrary, often contradictory or easily disproven, and centralized by an enduring refusal to succumb to socio-political, economic, and even religious forms of control more commonly depicted through science-fiction than science proper. Riddled with uncertainty and marked by disunity, vaccine hesitant subjects grounded their identity in the narratives that depicted themselves as heroic autonomous individuals in possession of hidden truth by defying a global drive toward vaccination, even as unvaccinated populations are both contracting and dying from the virus at record numbers.

This is like what psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan describes as the confrontation with the Real: when one is forced to encounter the reality of their essentially incomplete humanity (or “lack”) due to the failure of language, they respond by identifying with humanist solutions as symbols to mask the overwhelming terror of the Real. Said differently, vaccine hesitancy can be understood as speech birthed from the trauma of egoic individualism, but for any response to resonate it must first be trauma informed. Orthodox psychoanalytic rhetorical criticism allows trauma-informed responses to understand that the increase in information and transparency will not break vaccine hesitancy because trauma re-organizes logic around its knot; one must be engaged at the level of their attachments and desires to receive care. This presentation will offer Orthodox perspectives to nuance how critique can function as care, how communal approaches like the Orthodox church can begin the breakdown of the ego, and by deferring to Orthodox leaders (such as Metropolitan Tikhon of the OCA, Metropolitan Hilarion of the ROC, or Metropolitan Joseph in the AOCA) and authorities that have engaged in trauma-informed care (such as Fr. Abernathy’s Neighborhood Resilience Project in Pittsburgh) to be able to communicate with, persuade, and treat the vaccine hesitant.

**Bio:** Alex Holguin is a doctoral student in the department of communication at the University of Pittsburgh that specializes in Lacanian psychoanalytic theories of communication and Orthodox Christian studies where he is also an instructor of public speaking and argument, and the founder of *Seminar Trinity* – a free, virtual, Christian psychoanalytic reading and writing group. He currently attends St. Moses the Black Antiochian Orthodox mission parish in Pittsburgh, PA.

## **Session 4: Workshops**

### *4.1 Healthy Self-Esteem Through an Orthodox Christian Lens* Vickey Easa, LICSW

This workshop will educate caregivers on two unique lenses of Self Esteem: the three unhealthy sources of self esteem and feeling better or less than those around us. We will explore how to assist others in shifting into the one healthy source of self esteem and the healthy center (ie: not better or less than) that stems from God.

Today's secular world has worth backwards: many people believe our worth is connected to "xyz." Healthy Self Esteem actually stems from the inside out, not xyz (outside in). And it is given by God at birth. Those three unhealthy sources are: Achievement Based, Society Based, Attribute/Asset Based. When our worth comes from these three unhealthy sources, we are always left unhappy and unfulfilled. Each source has its own unique outlook, challenges, and unhealthy goals attached. This seminar will go into detail on each one. When we recognize the distinction, we can assist our clients to flip their esteem back to the inside, based on God and His image. Healthy self esteem, at the core, is when we can say the following sentences:

\*I have worth because I was born in the image of God.

\*I stand equal to all; eye to eye and toe to toe. I am not better nor worse than others.

\*I'm enough and I matter, in spite of my flaws and imperfections.

\*I can hold myself in warm regard, in spite of my flaws and imperfections.

Note, these last two recognize our human-ness. As humans, we are imperfect. This workshop will also speak to assisting our clients to deal with and navigate through their human imperfections. It is our own judgement of human imperfection that sends us into feeling Better Than others (judging them) or Less Than others (judging ourselves). It is only from our healthy center where we can accept our human imperfections and not excuse ourselves for them, nor berate ourselves for them.

**Bio:** Vickey has been a practicing therapist since 2008 and in private practice since 2011. She is certified in Relational Life Therapy and a certified Clini-Coach®. She is affiliated with the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese and currently attends St George Orthodox Church, West Roxbury, MA.

#### *4.2 Continuing Bonds & Life After Death Beliefs*

Leigh-Ann Theophilos, PsyD

Dean Theophilos, MA, LCPC

**Abstract:** This one-hour workshop will define and discuss the topic of continuing bonds, or how individuals stay connected to the deceased. The workshop will define both research and clinical examples of continuing bonds, the most recent research regarding their role in the grieving process, and discuss their connection to life-after-death beliefs. The workshop is developed

from Leigh-Ann Theophilos' dissertation that was completed in 2020. The workshop will provide both opportunities for discussion, resources and handouts for helping professionals to use immediately in their line of work, as well as a commentary from an Orthodox perspective from Dean Theophilos.

**Bio:** Leigh-Ann is currently employed at The Mansio Center in Glen Ellyn, Illinois as a post-doctoral fellow. Leigh-Ann has a Master's of Arts in Addiction Studies from Hazelden Graduate School of Addiction Studies, a Master's of Arts in Clinical Psychology from the Minnesota School of Professional Psychology, and a Doctorate of Psychology (Psy.D.) in Clinical Psychology from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology. She is a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC) in the state of Minnesota, a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT) with the Yoga Alliance, and a Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga Facilitator (TCTS-Y-F) through the Center for Trauma and Embodiment at Justice Resource Institute. Leigh-Ann was baptized in the Orthodox Church of American at St. Mary's OCA in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2014 and currently attends Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church in Westchester, Illinois.

**Bio:** Dean is a mental health therapist at The Mansio Center, a private practice in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. He has been working in the mental health field since 2012 and is a licensed mental health counselor in both Illinois and Minnesota. Dean is also a licensed and certified alcohol and drug counselor and has clinical experience in both Christian-based and secular addiction treatment centers. Additionally, Dean is an EMDR trained therapist specializing in the treatment of addiction and PTSD. He is a member of Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church in Westchester, Illinois.

#### 4.3 (Virtual) COVID in the Mission Field of the Orthodox Church Presbytera Renee Ritsi

**Abstract:** Social media, news channels, dinner-time discussions and even this OCAMPR event are adding to our Covid information arsenal. National and state statistics, CDC guidelines and school district updates come our way every day which help us to recognize and analyze the virus's impact on our life. Throughout all of these months, the rest of the world has gone through their own experience of Covid with some similarities and some differences. This workshop will examine a few of the places that the Orthodox Christian Mission Center works internationally and discuss how Covid's reach is impacting the

social and interpersonal aspects of Mission work, and how Covid is impacting the life of the Church.

**Bio:** Presbytera Renee Ritsi, her husband, Fr. Martin Ritsi and their children were sent as OCMC missionaries to Nairobi Kenya (1987-1991) to serve the Archdiocese of Irinopouli and then in Albania for six years (1992-1998), under Archbishop Anastasios. Presbytera now lives in St. Augustine, FL, where she is the Teams Associate Director at the Orthodox Christian Mission Center.

## **Session 5: Workshops**

### *5.1 An Unexpected Tomorrow: Picking up the Pieces After a Suicide*

Anna Gisetti, MA, Alexandra Wyman, MS, OTR

**Abstract:** As a result of the pandemic, we have experienced an increase in economic stress, social isolation, issues related to mental illness, and suicide. Johns Hopkins Medicine also notes the increase in barriers to treatment related to COVID-19. This presentation will explore the steps taken in the aftermath of a family member's death by suicide. Session participants will explore the grief process and how it differs from other forms of death, and explore the healing process from a holistic, Orthodox perspective. We will discuss what resources are available to caregivers when the helpers need help.

**Bio:** Alexandra Wyman (Gisetti), MS, OTR

Training: QPR Suicide Prevention, Youth Mental Health First Aid, Bessel van der Kolk Trauma training, School district training in mental health and suicide prevention

Current Place of Employment: Occupational Therapist for Jefferson County School District

Jurisdictional Affiliation: St. John Chrysostom Antiochian Orthodox Church, Lakewood, CO

**Bio:** Anna Gisetti, MA, School Counseling

Training: ASIST Suicide Prevention, QPR Suicide Prevention, Youth Mental Health First Aid (trainer), Bessel van der Kolk Trauma training, CSSRC Suicide Prevention trainings, CSSRC Trauma-Informed Care trainings. Additionally, Anna has trained thousands of school professionals and stakeholders, including community members and law enforcement, in the field of suicide prevention and intervention.

Current Place of Employment: School Counselor in Jefferson County School District

Jurisdictional Affiliation: Choir Director, St. John Chrysostom Antiochian Orthodox Church, Lakewood, CO

### *5.2 Spinning Straw Into Gold*

Corina Gheorghiu, LMFT, DDS

**Abstract:** The Inner Liturgy experiential workshop: Turning problems into solutions, the Orthodox liturgical way. The presentation will offer a practical, holistic approach of dealing with any problem through presence, watchfulness, awareness, self-offering, and prayer. The Inner Liturgy is the core solution for dealing with the effects of the global pandemic of fear, turmoil, and dissension at a personal and collective level. This is a complementary “therapy” which can be integrated in most modern psychology orientations, coaching and medical practice. It is based on the teachings of mother Siluana Vlad of blessed memory, former abbess of St. Siluan Monastery, Iasi, Romania.

**Bio:** Corina Gheorghiu is a marriage family therapist in private practice in Torrance, CA. She is trained in the psychodynamic modality, Integrative Body Psychotherapy, HeartMath and Heart Resilience, and a variety of somatic modalities: Feldenkrais and Intelligent Movement - Solutions For Optimal Health. She is a Prepare/Enrich facilitator and trainer. Corina was the spiritual daughter of the elder Sofian Boghiu of blessed memory. Abbess Siluana Vlad served as her mentor and teacher.

### 5.3 Paper Presentations

*What the 12 Steps and Trauma Can Teach About the Spiritual Journey*

Dean Theophilos, MA, LCPC, CRADC

**Abstract:** The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, the community-based self-help organization founded to help those struggling with alcoholism, differentiates itself from other addiction treatment modalities as it asks for those who enter the program to form a relationship with a “Higher Power” and to allow that “Higher Power” to help them recover. However, for those suffering from trauma, these spiritual concepts may be difficult or intolerable to apply to their lives. Thankfully approaches have been developed to integrate the spiritual principles of the 12 Steps with those struggling with both trauma



and addiction. The use of the 12 Steps for those in recovery who have trauma can elucidate how Orthodox Christian spirituality offers a unique process for those who enter into a healing relationship with Jesus Christ. My paper examines the approaches of using the 12 Steps of AA for those struggling with addiction and trauma and how trauma-informed 12 Step spiritual principles can highlight the distinctive healing power of Orthodox spirituality.

**Bio:** Dean is a mental health therapist at the Mansio Center, a private practice in Glen Ellyn, Illinois. He has been working in the mental health field since 2012 and is a licensed mental health counselor in both Illinois and Minnesota. Dean is also a licensed and certified alcohol and drug counselor and has clinical experience in both Christian-based and secular addiction treatment centers. He is also an EMDR trained therapist specializing in the treatment of addiction and PTSD. He is a member of Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church in Westchester, Illinois.

### *Paranoia in the Church in the Time of COVID*

Fr. Jan Veselak, MA

**Abstract:** The recent Covid pandemic and the resultant quarantine has risen people's hyperarousal stress, overwhelm, and paranoia. We see elevations of addictive behaviors, domestic violence, shootings, and political insurrection on all sides of the political spectrum. The stress of severe isolation and upset in routine living leads people to regress emotionally. Looking at regression from the psychodynamics of Kleinian *paranoid schizoid position*, we can see people experiencing paranoid anxiety and intellectual splitting. This manifests in the Church by the more fanatical fringe seeking new ways to separate themselves into elite communities and/or dropping out of society. This can eventually, if not checked, lead to schism. This paper looks at Klein's *paranoid schizoid position* from a religious perspective and its potential for ecclesial and spiritual self-destruction. This paper will give signs and symptoms of this paranoia and ways to deal with it pastorally.

*Nota bene:* this paper will not discuss current events between patriarchs. This paper focuses on universal problems as pan Orthodox phenomena.

**Bio:** Fr. Jan Veselak has 30 years of experience in the addiction field. He was a licensed addiction counselor for 12 years in the state of Colorado. He currently works as a recovery and relapse prevention coach in West Virginia. His current focus is on chemical dependence such as alcoholism and opioids. He is also certified in sex addiction therapy focusing especially on pornography

abuse. He also specializes in obsession and trauma work. He received his master's degree in Clinical Psychology with an addiction specialization from John F. Kennedy University in Orinda California in 1993. Fr. Jan is a priest serving in the Russian Church Abroad. He currently serves as a second priest at Christ the Savior Orthodox Church in Wayne, West Virginia.

*The Orthodox Church and the Mental Health Burden of a Pandemic*  
Fr John (Dan) Schieffler PhD ThM MSW

**Abstract:** The mental health burden of the recent COVID19 pandemic will be extensive and pervasive likely for many years to come. The stress and anxiety of this event will undoubtedly impact Orthodox communities regardless of location after the world has met the crisis and resumed some sense of normalcy. The assessment of mental health needs among Orthodox Christians remains a largely unstudied phenomenon. A small narrative review was conducted to ascertain ways in which other faith-based organizations have studied mental health in their own communities. While studies that address many minority and immigrant-based faith-based organizations exist, these are limited in scope. Given similarities that exist between minority and immigrant-based faith-based populations and Orthodox communities, a planning framework is suggested to improve an Orthodox response post-pandemic.

**Bio:** Fr. John (Dan) Schieffler Jr. PhD ThM MSW is a Clinical Assistant Professor of Healthcare Administration at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield CT in the College of Health Professions. He is a priestmonk serving at St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Cathedral in New York City under the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA (Moscow Patriarchate).

*5.4 Building a Culture of Care: Contextualizing Research with ~900 Missionaries to Orthodox Clergy and Church Workers*  
Geoff Whiteman, ThM, LMFT and Kristina Whiteman, PhD (ABD)

**Abstract:** In a mixed methods, grounded theory research project, we asked ~900 missionaries what it meant to be resilient, what had helped, and who made the difference. They had a lot to share in the comments (n=692) about their organizations. We coded this data and presented the findings at MissioNexus Leadership Conference in Sept. 2021. In a nutshell it comes down to this: Love in Action: Training, Leading, and Caring toward missional

resilience. While the study was not overtly about Orthodox Clergy and Church Workers, the findings may help guide the way to crafting a culture of care within our communities. In the era of COVID, it is time to come together and build a culture of care within our church communities. The findings from this study, open the path for a conversation about what this can look like in our church context right now.

**Bio:** Geoff Whiteman, ThM, LMFT is passionate about helping people and communities connect their life's purpose with God's mission in the world. Geoff is a licensed marriage and family therapist in the state of Kentucky, and holds a ThM in World Mission and Evangelism from Asbury Theological Seminary. Geoff is a researcher and international speaker on the topic of Missional Resilience. Together with Kriss Whiteman, PhD (ABD), his wife of 18 years, they oversee the care and training of long-term missionaries at the Orthodox Christian Mission Center as mission specialists ([bit.ly/WhitemanFamily](http://bit.ly/WhitemanFamily)) where they have been serving in various capacities since 2007. Together with their son Patrick, they are members of Holy Mother Queen of All Orthodox Church (GOC) in Lexington, KY.