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Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago: St. Iakovos Retreat Center to lodge COVID-19 first responders required to quarantine



The St. Iakovos Retreat Center, a ministry of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago, will temporarily convert its facilities into a quarantine site for COVID-19 first responders.

Beginning on Monday, May 4th, health care workers, EMT personnel, firefighters, and law enforcement officers exposed to the COVID-19 virus can access the Retreat Center facilities for the required 14-day quarantine period free of charge. The Retreat Center recently announced it closed its doors to groups, camps, and retreats as a result of the COVID-19 crisis.

The use of the Retreat Center for COVID-19 first responders is offered out of Christian love for neighbors of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago and the St. Iakovos Retreat Center. The project, called “Project Agape” (“love” in Greek), provides a beautiful, peaceful environment for first responders to quarantine to

reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 to family and loved ones. The Retreat Center serves as an alternative to garages, vehicles or other tight spaces that first responders have been choosing to quarantine in to avoid exposing their families.

“Loving one another is the essence of Christ’s teachings and offering the St. Iakovos Retreat Center to first responders is one small expression of gratitude to the professionals who continue to risk their own lives to care for and protect us all,” said His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago. “We are truly blessed to have the ability to offer our facilities to our first responders and are humbled to call ourselves their servants.”

The St. Iakovos Retreat Center will provide lodging and limited, basic need services only. No medical services will be provided by or at the Retreat Center. The staff, on advice of medical professionals, has established a safety protocol to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection and spread.

Professional cleaning services using COVID-19 cleaning procedures and appropriate time gaps between guests are among the many precautions that the Retreat Center is taking to help reduce the risk of virus spread on the property. Level 5 professional cleaning and a multi-week time gap will also be used after the temporary quarantine period ends and before the Retreat Center reopens its doors for the public to provide the maximum level of comfort to future guests of the Retreat Center.

“Our Retreat Center staff is honored to open our doors to first responders and provide a comfortable and peaceful environment to wait out their quarantine period,” said Chrysanthy Tiggas, Director of the Retreat Center. “Our staff will do everything possible to make our temporary guests feel at home and achieve peace of mind.”

First responder guests will have the ability to enjoy the St. Iakovos Retreat Center’s outdoor space, including walking trails and fields, provided they abide by CDC social distancing rules. The marina, swimming pool and other areas will be made unavailable due to elevated risks of non-compliance with social distancing practices.

“Because we are called to do the work of Christ, we are truly humbled to offer this opportunity to serve those who serve others for a living,” said John Balourdos, president of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center Board of Directors. “The Retreat Center staff is committed to helping those who are putting their lives on the line every day for us. We have so many wonderful uses of this Retreat Center, but I am really proud of the staff, the board, and the Metropolis of Chicago for sharing this ministry

to our community during this unprecedented crisis.”

Project Agape is temporary and slated to run through June 30, 2020. The Retreat Center expects to receive its first quarantine guest imminently. The Retreat Center will consider all requests, but will accept guests on a first-come, first-serve basis. For more information about Project Agape, please contact Chrysanthy Tiggas at or (262) 864-9090.

To make a donation to the Retreat Center to help with expenses of carrying out Project Agape, please visit our website at http://www.gosirc.org/donate. Most importantly, please keep the Retreat Center, its quarantined guests, the staff, first responders, and all suffering from the COVID-19 virus in your prayers.

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