

Meet OCMC Missionaries Preparing for Deployment Overseas



Josef and Euphrosini Candelario, Elaine Piniat, and Steve and Theophani Sarigianis have a lot in common. Not only are they all preparing for OCMC missionary service, but they are doing so during the COVID-19 pandemic. Missionaries are responsible for raising support partners who make their service abroad possible by lifting them up in prayer and offering financial support. In spite of the challenges during the pandemic, they have been heartened by the response of OCMC supporters as they reach out to their fellow Orthodox Christians to make their missionary service possible.

In December of 2019, the Candelarios were officially approved as OCMC long-term missionaries to Sweden. Josef was finishing up his Master of Theology (ThM) at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, and Euphrosini was working part-time as a freelance designer. Soon they began planning a visit back home and contacting parishes to begin building their support team. At about the same time, the Governor of California began a state-wide lock down. The young couple immediately switched gears and moved to online presentations. They have been pleasantly surprised by the positive response they have received from parishes they've met virtually and their willingness to offer financial support for their upcoming ministry. They shared, "Like the story of the loaves and fish, God is multiplying the gifts that are being offered to Him. We are grateful and accepting for all that is before us."

This same story of gratitude and creativity is repeated by the others. Elaine Piniat, who will also serve in Sweden, shares, "At times, raising support has been slower than it would've been without a pandemic. These times are uncertain, and many

people and parishes are experiencing great hardship. I've done 16 church presentations; all but two were on Zoom. I think things are going well. By the beginning of December, I was 63% funded. I've made great progress! God-willing, I'll make it to Sweden this spring."

The Sarigianis family's story of gratitude is similar: "The circumstances of the pandemic have been challenging at times because we couldn't start our 'real lives' as long-term missionaries in Albania in 2020. Yet, we still hold gratitude in our hearts for all that has come our way, good and bad, and the many blessings of 2020. God is always finding new ways to break into our lives and unite us with His people. We have been humbled by the generosity of so many and uplifted continuously as more and more people partner with us on this journey! We anticipate departing for Albania this spring!"

The energy and commitment of these individuals tells us of their love and response to God's calling. As each of us hears of the needs around the world and the great need to share His message of love and salvation, these words from Elaine give us great hope: "A sign outside a church says, 'Finding yourself is actually returning to yourself.' This is how I feel about answering the call to become a missionary. It is in Christ and serving others that we find our true, authentic selves. Becoming a missionary is something that has been on my heart for a decade. By answering that call, I feel that I've found myself, and by finding myself, I've actually returned to myself and who God has created me to be."

Please prayerfully consider how you might enter the mission field like Elaine, the Candelario family, or the Sarigianis family, by clicking here: [Become an OCMC Missionary](#). To learn how to support our missionaries preparing for service or already in the field click here: [Missionaries](#).

Interests

Missionary

Missionaries

The Candelario Family

The Sarigianis Family

Ms. Elaine Piniat

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