



# GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO ST. IAKOVOS RETREAT CENTER INC.

*A place of faith, a place of fellowship*

***“I have surely built you a house of habitation, a settled place where you will dwell in forever”  
1 Kings 8:13***

Although it would be impossible to capture and share everything that has taken place at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center since the last clergy laity, a few of the highlights and memorable occasions need to be shared. The end of 2013 and all of 2014 were filled with construction. Despite the bitterly cold end to that winter, and despite the rain -- and the resulting mud -- in the spring, construction pressed on, allowing the Tomaras Lodge and two cottages to be nearly complete by the year's end. The year 2015 brought the opening of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center, the realization of His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos' dream.

## ***Facilities:***

*Tomaras Lodge:* The Tomaras Lodge offers individual style accommodations through its 26 guestrooms, which feature two double beds and a private bathroom in each. The Tomaras Lodge is ideal for family and adult ministries, and is also utilized for youth and camp. The main focal point of the Tomaras Lodge is the Great Room, which is complete with a cathedral-style post and beam ceiling, and an indoor/outdoor fireplace overlooking Friendship Lake. The amenities in the Tomaras Lodge include heat, air-conditioning, and Wi-Fi throughout the entire building, including the guest rooms.

*Cafeteria:* Located on the lower level of the Tomaras Lodge, our 200-seat cafeteria and commercial kitchen are used to prepare and serve warm homemade meals, many from our own ethnic tradition, and only using the freshest ingredients. The space adjacent to the main Cafe area can also be converted to be up to four meeting rooms, helping St. Iakovos to meet the unique needs of its guests and visitors.

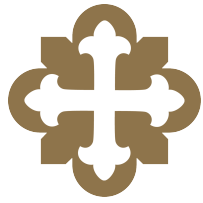
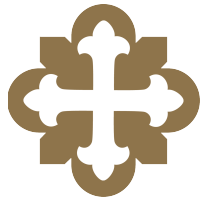
*Cottages:* The two cottages offer communal-style lodging, ideal for youth camps or those seeking a group environment. Each cottage accommodates up to 32 individuals through two sleeping rooms and features a full bathroom, heat, air conditioning, and access Wi-Fi. One of the Cottages has been named the “Pappas Cottage” after the Grand Benefactor of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center, Mr. Theodore Pappas.

*Additional Facilities:* In addition to the new facilities, the Log Lodge, featuring a gathering room and two sleeping rooms, is available for smaller retreats and events. The beautiful chapel, the heart and soul of the entire facility, is available year round for worship, prayer and focused discussion.

*Activities:* On top of the new structural work, the new construction also brought the addition of new activities. The list of activities now includes softball, soccer, basketball, grass volleyball, tennis, wagon rides, an outdoor pool, walking trails (featuring the Proskinitaria), campfires, barn visits, and animal petting.

## ***2015 Report:***

Following the conclusion of construction, the month of March brought the Fanari Winter Camping program, which was not only full of joy and excitement at finally being home, it was also the first group that the Retreat Center hosted in its new facilities. Fanari Winter Camp was followed by several retreats from many organizations throughout the Metropolis including the Clergy Syndesmos and multiple GOYA groups. Much of late spring was spent preparing to host the Fanari summer camping program, which would make two large programmatic changes: the



first being the move from the previous facility to the St. Iakovos Retreat Center, and the second being the move from one large week with over 400 of campers, to four individual weeks with just over 100 campers.

In June of 2015, just before the Fanari summer program, the Grand Opening of the new facilities took place. Over 200 clergy and laity from throughout the Metropolis of Chicago joined His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos and His Grace Bishop Demetrios in prayer and worship as the opening of the doors to the new facilities was celebrated. Guests of honor included the late Mr. Chris Tomaras, Great Benefactor of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center, and Mr. John Pappas, the son of the Grand Benefactor Mr. Theodore Pappas.

On June 15, just days after the historic opening of the Retreat Center, the grounds were found alive again as the Fanari campers and staff moved in for the summer season. Throughout the summer, campers engaged in worship, prayer and exploration of our faith, while sharing in fun and fellowship with each other. The four weeks of camp were a wonderful experience that can be captured in the words of our Lord: *“Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14)*. It was evident during the four weeks of camp that through the Fanari Program, the youth of our metropolis drew closer to God and each other at the Retreat Center.

Following the eventful and exciting summer, the St. Iakovos Retreat Center remained busy, hosting events throughout the autumn. Community retreats included the Assumption Cathedral from Chicago, the Holy Cross Parish from Justice, and the Sts. Constantine & Helen Cathedral from Merrillville, IN. The Family Synaxis ministry held its annual Labor Day weekend family retreat in September with over 190 participants. The Metropolis Pick-up Your Cross ministry held its annual fall retreat in October for families with youth and young adults with challenges. The fall was also busy with overnight and weekend retreats from many GOYA's, as well as Antiochian Young Adults, and the Armenian Youth.

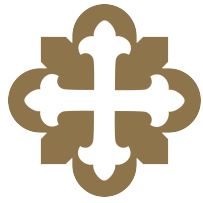
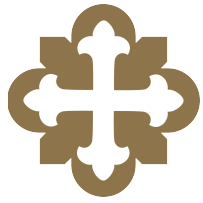
The year of 2015 has been filled with many firsts in the life of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center. It has been through the love and support of hundreds of people that this first year has been so memorable. We would like to take this opportunity to say to those who visited, celebrated, prayed, worshiped and retreated with us, *“Every time I think of you, I thank my God” (Philippians 1:30)*

#### ***Plans for 2016:***

Many exciting retreats and new ministries have already been scheduled for the 2016 calendar year, with announcements and invitations for participation shortly to come. The Fanari winter camp will be here in a few short months, and the Fanari summer camp will be returning for four weeks in June and July. In June, the St. Iakovos Retreat Center will also be the host to a camp for fostered and abandoned youth from the Kenosha area. Additionally, many other Orthodox Jurisdictions will be moving their programs currently running out of other rented facilities to the St. Iakovos Retreat Center. Furthermore, the St. Iakovos Retreat Center will also be working with several educational, nonprofit, and religious organizations outside of the Orthodox community.

#### ***Growth and Staffing:***

With new facilities come greater staffing needs, and how we fulfilled these needs is worth noting. The Kenosha Achievement Center (The KAC) is a local nonprofit organization that works for and with persons with disabilities, fulfilling two main goals: first, to provide services and programs for people with disabilities out of their various centers; and second, to find employment opportunities and training for persons with disabilities in the local community. The St. Iakovos Retreat Center has partnered with the KAC to assist with food service, janitorial work



and housekeeping needs as they arise. This partnership has been a wonderful solution to the staffing needs for the Retreat Center, and it serves as a reflection of the established and important Metropolis Pick Up Your Cross ministry. Greater still, it has been a wonderful witness of our faith to the local community.

***The Future Plans:***

The upcoming ministry of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center will continue to include growth in facilities and activities on the property. Capital improvements include the addition of an infirmary (for which funds are currently being raised), and we are hoping to build a large Byzantine chapel. Additionally, we hope to add new activities including boating, swimming, sand volleyball, and a permanent basketball court in 2016. In order to achieve these goals, and enhance our ministry to our beloved Metropolis, we will be emphasizing our marketing efforts to increase facility usage throughout the year.

***How to Get Involved:***

Scripture states that *“For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God” (Hebrews 3:4)*, a truth that is evident in the life of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center. This gift from our spiritual father to us, his spiritual children, is first and foremost through our Lord and Creator. Additionally, many have given of their time, talent and treasures to build this place for the spiritual rejuvenation of the people and parishes in the Metropolis of Chicago. We would like to recognize all those who have contributed to the establishment and success of this ministry by saying, *“We thank God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers” (1 Thessalonians 1:2)*.

However, this ministry finds its strength in the beautiful community of believers and supporters. For those who are able and willing, here are some ways you can help:

- Spread the word about our facility to religious, educational, and nonprofit organizations on a grassroots level by telling your friends, colleagues, or organization about us. Word of mouth is one of the most powerful marketing tools we have!
- Pray for us! The Retreat Center, its staff, the volunteers, the Board of Directors, construction crews -- everyone would benefit from your prayers as we work to make this facility a reflection of the beauty of God’s creation and love for the world.
- If you are interested in financial contributions to the St. Iakovos Retreat Center, including several naming opportunities, please let us know by contacting the office.
- Volunteer with us! Your time and talents are always appreciated. Please email or call the office to find out how you can help.

***Keep in Touch:***

The life of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center can be shared in and virtually experienced in various ways. Frequent postings are made on our website and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Flickr) regarding the current news, activities and users at the facility. Find us online!

***Plan Your Retreat or Event:***

The staff of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center is available to help you plan and organize a retreat or an event in the life of your family, such as a wedding, baptism, or family reunion. Day, overnight, and weekend opportunities are available for parish, community adult, youth and family celebrations. Let the staff of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center help you enjoy faith and fellowship, in a place built for you, where you can engage, experience, and grow.

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***“You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out”  
Deuteronomy 28:6***

