

THE ARK

Delivering the good news from the St. Iakovos Retreat Center



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Executive Director Message

Look Back, Look Forward: A Personal Reflection on the Summer Camping Season

Chrysanthy Tiggas – Executive Director

Over a year ago on June 14, 2020 my day started much like any other had. I rose early with the first glimpse of the sun and started my morning chores. I went and talked to the ducks, then grabbed my to-go cup of coffee and started my daily check of the property. The air was almost still, with the softest breeze blowing against my face as I crossed from the farm to the facilities. Surrounded by the hum of the crickets, the morning song of the birds, and the faint rustling of the trees. As the sun finished rising in the sky, I found myself sitting by Friendship Lake, enjoying refreshing sips of my hot bean juice, as the smallest of waves lapped against the shore. It was in this moment that it dawned on me that today would have been the first day of Fanari Camp, the highlight of my year at the Saint Iakovos Retreat Center. Immediately a wave of sadness, followed by anxiety, washed over me; it felt like the uncontrollable pull of the current. How were we, a non-profit, going to continue to weather what seemed like endless months of uncertainty? As a ministry centered on in-person gatherings and fellowship in Christ, we had been forced to close our doors just months prior, and there seemed to be no end in sight. The world around me was quiet and my body was still (except for the occasional raising of my mug to my lips), but my mind was racing. It felt like my very being was in turmoil, filled with an anxiety that was overwhelming.



“Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). As I sat there feeling the crushing weight of the pandemic and the uncertainty of its effects on our future, this scripture verse centered me. The catalyst for these overpowering feelings had been the realization that camp was not happening. For longer than I can remember, camp has been my guiding star. It is something that, even at 36 years old, anchors my soul, and this year I wouldn't have it. Yet even without it, I was not lost because it was in the stillness of the world around me that He made Himself present, despite the turmoil within me. All of a sudden, those decades of “Alone with God” following Orthros every morning at camp found their place, as if all those years had unknowingly been training for this moment. “Be still and know that I am God;” His power found in my powerlessness.

Fast forward 364 days. It was now June 13, 2021. I rose with the first glimpse of the sun, started my chores, went out and talked to the ducks – I remember that McDuck had a lot to say. I grabbed my to-go cup of coffee and departed the farm to head toward the facilities. On that morning though, I wouldn't find myself in the quietness of Friendship Lake; instead, the world around me was buzzing. I honestly don't remember if there was a breeze, I didn't hear the crickets, and I'm not even sure if there was a bird present onsite. However, golf carts were whizzing past me, and the walkie-talkie was ringing in my ear, alive with enthusiastic chatter. People were moving from here to there, setting things up at a speed fueled

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by happiness and joy. It was the first day of Fanari Camp, always a hectic day, but I was surprisingly still. This time the world around me was filled with an anxious joy, and a faint bit of uncertainty, but my mind and my soul were filled with an ease that I had missed and needed. “Be still and know that I am God;” His unwavering certainty found in the joyful movement around me.

It would be foolish to say that this past summer didn’t come with its challenges. In 16 years of camping ministry, I have never run a multi-week summer program in a pandemic and hope never to again. “Be still and know that I am God” still echoes in my mind. **It was through His guidance in the midst of our powerlessness, and through the love and determination of so many, that we had a beautiful summer. Hosting camp during the pandemic challenged us, forced us to think creatively, and frustrated us at times, but ultimately strengthened the program for years to come.** Together with Fr. Kosmas Kallis (Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries for the Metropolis of Chicago) and the leadership team of Fanari Camp, we were able to develop procedures that changed the way our camp functioned in order to prioritize the health and safety of each camper. Since outdoor programming was strongly encouraged by the CDC, the overwhelming majority of the daily activities took place outdoors, including parts of the day (such as Bible study and meals) that would typically take place indoors. Some of the challenges yielded positive changes that we will carry with us, and in doing so will continue to encourage communion with God through His creation. **Over 600 youth came through our doors and guided by the love and care of the young adult counselors and the leadership team, we had the time of our lives.**

It was a leap of faith that encouraged His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos of Blessed Memory to sign the papers purchasing a piece of property in Kansasville, Wisconsin 15 years ago. It was a leap of

faith to transition Fanari Camp to its new home at the Retreat Center seven years ago, shifting something that had worked as a one-week camp for over 40 years to a multi-week ministry focused program. It was with trepidation, but out of safety and necessity, that we canceled the 2020 camping season. It was with uncertainty, care, and encouragement from His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael, that we embarked on the 2021 camping season. Yet through it all, past and present: “Be still and know that I am God.” **As we look back to the beginning of our story, we can easily see Him.** As we look forward, despite feelings of uncertainty coming from within or from the world around us, **we know that the future will be as guided in His strength and love** as our past was. **The future of this ministry is written in His certainty, and within our stillness, we will discover it.** ■

“Being back at Fanari Camp this summer was an amazing feeling. It was a joy to be surrounded by staff, friends, campers and fellowship once again”

-Sabrina O’Connor, Program Coordinator Fanari Camp



Pictured Left to Right – Chrysanthy Tiggas (Saint Iakovos Retreat Center), Rev. Fr. Kosmas Kallis (Youth & Young Adult Director, Metropolis of Chicago), Joanna Psychogios (Staff Director, Fanari Camp), Sabrina O’Connor.

Basketball Court Donation

When the Fanari Campers arrived at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center this past summer, they were greeted with a big surprise. A brand new, beautiful outdoor basketball court. The Retreat Center was the recipient of a grant from the Hellenic Foundation to construct an outdoor high school regulation size basketball court to expand programming opportunities and



enhance the ministry of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center. The addition of this court, and the many games enjoyed by all, was a highlight of the 2021 camping season. On behalf of Fanari Camp, the campers and the Retreat Center, we would like to say thank you to the Hellenic Foundation for this great gift, and their continued support of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center. ■



Ernie's Pier – A Celebration of Our Marina

The day started with sunshine and ended with rainbows. Ernie's Pier was a celebration, a day of hope for more occasions to gather together and share milestones to celebrate.



It was a day of promise for many children and adults to enjoy the relaxation and recreation of our St. Iakovos Retreat Center Marina for many years to come.

Ernie Karras, a devoted board member, donor, and Retreat Center advocate, generously donated the funds to build our Pier in 2017 and equip and maintain the marina and its activities. The Pier accommodates 2 rowboats, 4 canoes, 2 kayaks, 2 paddleboats, as well as fishing poles, gear, and life jackets.

To maintain the lake, six aerators keep the lake water refreshing itself, all year long. Ernie has provided funds to stock the lake with fish, which are fun for our visitors to catch and release. A Fishing Derby took place at the dedication celebration and fun was had by all, including prizes for the biggest fish! At our beautiful lake we are reminded of Jesus the great fisherman and a fisher of men; creating disciples. We see discipleship

happening at the Retreat Center through our youth camps, adult retreats, and hospitality events we share with our friends in the faith and neighbors in the regional and local community.

Fanari camp teaches water and boating safety while campers enjoy the serenity of fishing and boating on the natural beauty of the lake surrounded by cattails and wild birds. Friendship Lake is aptly named as many new and rekindled friendships occur in this place. Building of relationship with God and others is at the core of what St. Iakovos Retreat Center provides. We are so thankful our Lord has provided us with this amazing gift of water recreation.

On August 21st as friends and family looked on, Father Sas prayed a blessing over our marina. We ask the Lord to continue sending blessings and protection



for these waters and those who enjoy them. The day proceeded with farm tractor wagon ride tours of the property for our guests and a wonderful dinner was hosted by a board member for this

private event. We are thankful to donors like Ernie Karras who make things possible in serving others through our Retreat Center mission. ■

15th Anniversary Watch Party



The 15th anniversary watch party commemorating our history and looking forward to our future was a success. Our thanks to His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael and Alison Victoria of HGTV Fame, for hosting.

The event took place on September 30th at Cubby Bear Chicago and was a fun social time for our guests. Opportunities to purchase commemorative pavers and the link to our anniversary and event video are available on our web page at www.gosirc.org. ■

GIVING TUESDAY

NOVEMBER 30TH

As we celebrate with family and friends and give thanks, let's remember St Iakovos Retreat Center on Giving Tuesday. On this day we celebrate the art of Giving. We give to charities to appreciate their service and their mission.

Let's Give Big for our inspiring Retreat Center and it's honorable mission and hard working board and staff who give from their heart everyday to make our Retreat Center a success!





GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

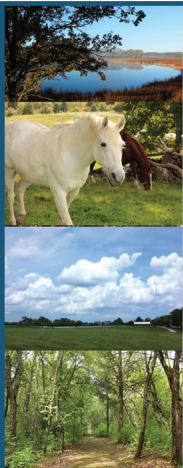
ST. IAKOVOS RETREAT CENTER

A place of faith, a place of fellowship

920 224th Avenue, Kansasville, WI 53139

Office Phone: 262-864-9090

www.GoSIRC.org



WE ARE OPEN!

The St. Iakovos Retreat Center is waiting for you!

With 137 acres of breathtaking outdoor space, lodging and activities, we are able to safely accommodate groups for retreats while following CDC guidelines.

Call us today to reserve your outdoor event!

Engage • Experience • Grow

Connect with the St. Iakovos Retreat Center at:



Commemorative Brick Pavers

Commemorate our 15th anniversary with a life-time legacy and be a part of our Retreat Center history. Honor your family, children, grandchildren, business, corporation, association or provide a lasting tribute memorial for a loved one.

Personalized brick pavers will be installed in the chapel area leading up to the front doors and on the cottage sidewalk to help beautify our grounds and enhance our place of retreat.

Our Mission: *Your gift helps us to achieve our mission to provide a place of retreat for faith, fellowship, and rejuvenation, so as to inspire personal growth within the peace and beauty of nature.*

Chapel Area:

- \$500** – 4 x 8 brick
3 lines/14 characters per line
- \$1,000** – 8 x 8 brick
6 lines/14 characters per line
- \$2,500** – 8 x 16 brick
6 lines/28 characters per line

Cottage Sidewalk Area:

- \$250** – 4 x 8 brick
3 lines/14 characters per line
**Fanari campers and counselors since 2015 only for this reduced price*
- \$500** – 4 x 8 brick
3 lines/14 characters per line
**Fanari campers and counselors prior to 2015*



www.GoSIRC.org/ordermybricknow

Any questions please contact:

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