

The Isaiah 44 Project - 2023 in Review

In this newsletter, we would like to summarize the activities of the Isaiah 44 Project in support of the Orthodox Church in Malawi's ministry to the people of God in that land, including the latest two boreholes on Church sites (see p.2) You will find some summary information on the financial donations by people on behalf of the Project as well.

Our *primary* focus is to provide safe drinking water to the people, in support of the greater ministry and mission of the Church to the people in Africa, specifically Malawi. Things got off to a fast start in 2023, with the drilling and blessing of the borehole at St. Katherine's parish in Masauli, in early February 2022. Bishop Fotios was able to participate personally in this blessing, much to the delight of the faithful and community members gathered.



Bolstered by this progress, we were so looking forward to continuing the work with additional boreholes - but then tragedy struck in the form of Cyclone Freddie which roared inland from the Indian Ocean, dumping torrential rains upon Malawi, especially in the south. This led to flash flooding that wiped out entire villages, destroyed infrastructure and killed thousands - an exact count is likely unknown to this day. This created a

Drill Baby Drill - New Boreholes - January 2024!

Great news from Malawi! With the arrival of funds in late December, contractors were secured to drill two new boreholes - both on the existing properties of local Malawi Orthodox Church parishes. The first was installed at Ss Cosmas and Damian parish in Nkhuwalla village T/A Nkalo. Working hard all day, the contractors set the drilling equipment, prepared the site and after drilling for several hours, they struck abundant water. The borehole integrity was secured firmly with pipe. After the ground work concrete was placed, and the pump installed it needed to cure for several days. Bishop Fotios visited the parish and blessed the



borehole in conjunction with the Feast of the Theophany (Baptism) of our



Lord. The next week, as the funds had been made available, another bore hole was drilled on the site of Ss Constantine and Helen Parish. The boring of the wells provided great cause for celebration, singing and joy in the Lord.

Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever....

By Pani Matka Christine Holet

Psalm 118:1

Joy. Gratitude. Rejoicing. Amazement. Surprise!

I see these and so many more emotions in the faces of all those assembled when the **Isaiah 44 Project** wells spring to life.

The children, eager to express the emotions they feel – even if they don't know why, but are reacting to the adults around them – jumping and dancing with their elders. The adults, understanding what a miracle has been accomplished – one that will impact their lives from now on. The clergy, rejoicing with their flocks and with the many others that have already been drawn to “come and see.”

And the humbling pictures of the signs with **Isaiah 44 Project** and the quote that started this whole thing....

Watching from here, I am surprised by my own joy. I can't say this enough – we take water so much for granted! In this current age of assumptions for air, water, food, clothing, shelter....to be taken by storm (literally!) to a land where these things are *never* assumed. The results have included a lot of reflection on how much I take for granted in my own life, and love for those we have been able to help.

I am also filled (still!) with so much gratitude for those who have helped in any way to make this work possible. As in our active ministry, we began this journey with a lot of faith and hope that our God, who directs all of our efforts, would act in His time and in a way that we would understand. Through all of the many beginnings of the **Isaiah 44 Project**, with its stops and starts, accomplishments and failures, we still have the peace that comes with that knowledge.

And we have not been disappointed!

So, here's to 2024 – exhilarating and challenging as it will no doubt be. With the same joy, gratitude, rejoicing, amazement and surprise as those far from us, we are hopeful of great things and will be watching with wonder as God at work in His world. Ω

**Locations Served by the Isaiah 44 Project
September 2022 - January 2024**



Jan. 2024 - New Boreholes, cont. from pg.1

Because the new boreholes are at the parish sites, the parish can better administer and provide security for the installation. The water is shared with all -as God has shared it with His Church.

May God bless these new installations to serve the people for Many, Many Blessed years! Ω

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|---|---|---------------------|
| ① | Nachuma Village-Zomba Orthodox Mission | Borehole 9/22 |
| ② | Masauli Village - Chiradzulu St. Anastasia Parish | Borehole 2/23 |
| ③ | Chiranga Village - Katete, Zomba - Mission | Emergency Food 8/23 |
| ④ | Swali Village - Namitumbo, Zomba - Mission | Emergency Food 8/23 |
| ⑤ | Jali Village - Zomba - Orthodox Mission | Emergency Food 8/23 |
| ⑥ | Kalimbuka - Ss Athanasios & Cyril Parish | Emergency Food 8/23 |
| ⑦ | Nkhuwalla Village Chiradzulu -Ss Cosmas & Damian | Borehole 1/24 |
| ⑧ | Mtupanyama Village - Chiradzulu Ss Const. and Helen | Borehole 1/24 |

The Isaiah 44 Project



I will pour water on the thirsty land
and streams on the dry ground...
and people will come to say
'I belong to the LORD.'

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Funding Account:

Make checks payable to:

St. Nicholas Charity Legacy Fund:
Account SN-00

Mail to:

Greater Horizons - Donor Services

St. Nicholas Charity Legacy Fund -
Account SN-00

1055 Broadway Blvd., Suite 130
Kansas City, MO 64105

Check Notation: Is.44 Project-Wells

Email: support@greaterhorizons.org

To Donate ONLINE

<https://greaterhorizons.kimbria.com/gh>

Greater Horizons Help-Information
Phone: 866.627.3440



Facebook: www.tinyurl.com/bdfdm587

or on Facebook search -'Isaiah 44 Project'

Website: www.Orthodoxsteward.com

2023 Financial Summary - Isaiah 44 Project

January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023

This report summarizes the administration of the Isaiah 44 Project. A fund titled *St. Nicholas Charity Legacy Fund (SN-00)* has been set up with Greater Horizons, a US-based investment management firm, based in Grand Prairie, Nebraska, for solely charitable purposes. By US law, all funds held in the St. Nicholas Charity Legacy Fund can only be distributed to approved charitable institutions (501c3 organizations). As custodian of monies donated to the fund, Greater Horizons provides administrative support including donor management/reporting, fund management, distribution of funds, tax accounting, etc. Greater Horizons receives a small investment fee monthly, based on the amount of funds in the account. This is represented below as project expenses + admin. fees (\$417.36) which is counterbalanced by the income (dividends and interest) of \$331.88 on funds waiting in the account for distribution. Acknowledgement of Donations is sent from Greater Horizons for donations that exceed \$250. The administrators of the Isaiah 44 Project also follow up directly with all known donors directly as well, regardless of amount.

In 2023, funds in the form of grants were distributed to Equipping Leaders International and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA, which served as the US-based charitable coordinators for funding the overseas projects coordinated locally by the Malawi Orthodox Church.

Beginning Fund Balance	\$5,107.13	<i>(1/1/23)</i>
Contributions	22,607.74	
Interest and Dividends	331.88	
Unrealized Gains (Losses)	30.67	
Realized Gains (Losses)	3.69	
Grants Approved	(20,700.00)	
Net Project Income (Expenses)	(167.30)	
Administrative Fees	(249.96)	
Change in Account Value	1,856.72	
Ending Fund Balance	\$6,963.85	<i>(12/31/23)</i>

Administrative Support: Private donations cover other expenses of the Isaiah 44 Project such as Communications (including this newsletter, website, communications with Malawi, communications with donors, mailings with Greater Horizons, etc.) No donor funds that are sent to the Isaiah 44 Project (St. Nicholas Charity Legacy Fund) are used for these support services so that the donations to the Project can be used solely and directly to fund the charitable projects.

The Isaiah 44 Project is stewarded so as to maintain full transparency and maximize the availability of funds for the projects abroad. Feel free to submit any questions to the Administrator (*left column*).

Emergency Needs - Services

terrible crisis - rescuing people, sustaining hundreds of thousands of homeless people, combatting a dire shortage of food and the even worse, devastating effects of water contamination from flooding. Thankfully, reports from Malawi confirmed that the two boreholes in place remained so, and could provide safe and abundant potable water for residents. The borehole at St. Katherine's parish turned it into a site for people seeking refuge in their homelessness. An outbreak of cholera led to more misery, suffering and death for our brothers and sisters abroad. The Lord invited us to prayer for them in their sorrow. To assist in emergency relief, the clergy from Malawi requested emergency aid in the form of donations for food and other supplies. Last summer, \$4000 was sent to Malawi for the purchase of sacks of maize - which was distributed by Fr. Nikodemos Chilembwe, to various villages that remained in dire need of help.

Our friends in the Malawi Orthodox Church have identified additional contractors who could provide the service of drilling the boreholes at an even lower price. Additional funds for boreholes, these were sent to Malawi in December and two new boreholes were drilled in January, 2024 (*see p.1*).

By the Numbers

We are truly humbled, that in just 2023, over \$22,607 was contributed to Well Projects and Emergency relief! These funds were bundled and distributed as grants, bringing \$20,700 administered locally to the people of Malawi, through the ministry of the Church in the contracted work for 3 boreholes and the purchase/distribution of emergency food due to Cyclone Freddie. The ~\$1900 received exceeding that distributed has been pooled for the next borehole project - hopefully in Q1 2024! This would be *in addition* to the two boreholes drilled in January 2024 from the December 2023 funds.



Spreading the Word

In an effort to spread the word about the **Isaiah 44 Project**, we have tried to provide meaningful information to whomever might be interested in hearing the story of this work and who might desire to contribute in any way to the spiritual or material work of the Project. Over the past year, we've been blessed to provide information to hundreds of people about the project through informal discussions or presentations in parish contexts. This included formal presentations or support from Holy Assumption parish (UOC) in Northampton, Pa, Nativity of the Blessed Virgin (Serbian) in Haydensville, VA, St. Demetrius parish (UOC) in Carteret, NJ, St. Nicholas parish (UOC) in Charlottesville, VA, St Vladimir Cathedral (UOC) in Philadelphia, PA and Four Evangelists (UOC) in Bel Air, Md. and in various clergy gatherings as well. But the story is not limited to Orthodox Christians. Many others from other Christian traditions, and even non-Christians, have supported the project whole-heartedly. Slowly, as the story is told, people hear and want to help.

Sometimes at parish presentations, there is a great, enthusiastic desire to make a donation immediately! Sometimes, a group or a family, will simply pause, and pray and as the Lord leads them respond in a way that is appropriate to them. For me, it's quite moving to be able to tell the Malawi story - of the need and God's meeting that need for His people through the **Isaiah 44 Project**. One parish is giving serious consideration to taking **on a well project for their parish** - to cover the costs completely! *What a blessing that would be, not only for the Malawians, but for any*

congregation that opens their hearts to God's love in that way!

Telling the story in person, for me, inspires a sense of awe in how God so loves His people. I've come to learn of others who are doing similar projects of grace and charity - like our friends at Equipping Leaders International, or my Roman Catholic friend Lee and her friends doing similar work in other areas of need. What I sense happening is a *unity of purpose*, even a network, where the generosity of sharing of God's riches and the Christian story leads to great blessings for all. At a time when *unity* seems to be rare or invisible, this blessing stands out as the *powerful manifestation of God at work in our world*.

We are hoping to find new ways to spread this message as we get our processes of collection and transfer of funds to Malawi. Coordination with the people there on the ground to put funds to work for God's people in the most efficient way enhances the effectiveness of the overall mission of his Church.



We hope to develop our communications modes in the future: newsletter, website, Facebook page, etc. If you would like to put your gifts to work for the *Isaiah 44 Project*, let us know!

Future Activities ~ 2024 and Beyond?

Blessed with a good start to 2024, we are ever hopeful that new activities can both continue the projects that have already begun, but also consideration of new projects wherein God might use the Project framework to benefit the people of Malawi through the Orthodox Church there. Here are a few thoughts:

Additional Boreholes: Since the inception of the *Isaiah 44 Project* there are now four boreholes set in place in Malawi. We hope to continue this work as God permits. The Malawians have proposed the possibility of one borehole at each of their 15 parishes. This is not an unrealistic goal - not necessarily for completion in 2024, but in the foreseeable future, perhaps by the end of 2025 or 2026.

Church Support Efforts: Because the Project is conceived as an Orthodox Church-based effort in Malawi, it's not outside the scope of the project to consider other worthwhile work (like the emergency food in 2023) that fosters the life of the people and the work of the Orthodox Church based in Malawi. Just the pictures of the church gathering places for worship in Malawi show us how different their church needs are than our own. One of the parishes has church walls supported by thin logs with little more than a thatched roof. (Imagine being there if a cyclone hits!) Other congregations meet in open air gatherings. These situations are the ways, places and means that God Himself has provided for the people. Yet, it's not unreasonable to consider a roof which actually protects from the rainwater, or other fundamental needs, starting with wells if necessary! Fr. Nicodemus Chilembwe has shared some stories about how necessary it is to support youth ministry and other ways of gathering people in the Faith to water their souls in God's love. In every case, we will follow the lead of the Malawian Church to show us how best we can steward the gifts that God provides - always mindful of that central place that the water-well ministry holds for the *Isaiah 44 Project*.

Malawi Visitation? - Since I first learned about Malawi two years ago, I've hoped to visit this land. Perhaps if God permits, a trip will be possible in 2024. The insights from the lived experience will be so helpful in the future work of the *Isaiah 44 Project*. And it won't be without its challenges.

US Church Outreach - Some of the most enriching encounters we've had here in the US Orthodox parishes is when where people realize that they can, with a simple act of love, make a difference in the lives of countless people abroad.

2023 in Review, cont. from p.5

We would like to **expand this effort** and dedicate times and places where this story can be told. We would like to aim for 10 such visitations in 2024 .

Thus far, presentations have been given in parishes of three different jurisdictions (UOC of USA, ACROD, Serbian) and hopefully others can share the story as well. Donations have been graciously made by Roman Catholics, Protestants, and other faiths. There is a power of uniting people together at work that is from God, who is love, is at work in projects like this.

You can help this effort!

Talk to your pastor and ask if a presentation at your church would be possible this year. There is no up-front commitment needed - let's talk about what might be possible. I would enjoy the opportunity to share the story with other Church organizations - such as multi-jurisdictional Clergy Fellowships, Deaneries, Ukrainian Orthodox League, Retreats or Church based charity or youth groups. Anybody who might enjoy hearing the story - including non-Orthodox folks!

Online Presence - It would be great if we could improve our communications via a dedicated website in 2024 and social media initiatives. If you know of anyone with the talent and interest in supporting such an effort, let us know.

Isaiah 44 Project Network - We've considered expanding our connections to those who wish to be more deeply involved in this work . We would like to identify three 'water feasts' during the Orthodox calendar year that can serve as gathering days for interested participants for updates, fellowship and planning. 'Water Feasts' might include the Sunday of the Samaritan Woman, Procession of the Holy Cross (water blessing), Theophany, or any of the saints who had a special encounter with God through water, such as Saint Donatus, mentioned in the Summer 2023 Newsletter.



The great blessing for Christine and me in The Isaiah 44 Project is that we are the immediate recipients of the abundant outpouring of thanksgiving, love and prayers from our Malawian brothers and sisters. Sometimes they send short videos - with people singing, clapping and dancing. Other times a village elder (man or woman) will be the official spokesperson for the village and express a short, heartfelt message through video to us. The words of the hearts of people are a timeless and unmistakable sign of God's blessing. The Church is comprised of people full of Thanksgiving -

eucharist, which they celebrate every Sunday and every day - inspiring all of us to do the same.

In all of these and many other ways, Christine and I have seen the hand of God at work through the Isaiah 44 Project. We hope that you experience the touch of God in the same way through your participation in The Isaiah 44 Project Ω

*We give thanks to Almighty God for all of His blessings and to you for your prayers,
your contributions and support for the work of the Isaiah 44 Project .*

We look forward to the ways that God will work through you in the days to come as 2024 unfolds!