

### No.3

#### The Deans of the Theological Faculties meet the Journalists

The printed and electronic media from Macedonia were invited to the meeting, on 19 May 2004. Since the interest for cooperation expressed by the Theological Faculties was great, thus the journalists' turnout was big. Out of the 16 invited media houses, 14 responded to the invitation. Dr. Jovan Takovski, the Dean of the Orthodox Faculty, D-r. Ismail Bardhi, the Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies and MCIC's Aleksandar Krzalovski, the PRM Program Coordinator, presented the program's goals, the cooperation modes between the Faculties, as well as the realized activities and the impressions.

The Deans of the Faculties expressed satisfaction with the cooperation, regretting that this positive experience has not taken place earlier. However, they acknowledged the fact that thanks to MCIC it comes about right now.

The Dean Bardhi pointed out that the friendship and the mutual respect with Mr. Takovski, in the capacity of Deans of the Faculties, is a good example to be followed by the students as well.

D-r. Takovski offered his observation: Once cooperation is realized at individual level, it passes on the whole community. The educational institutions are morally obliged to stimulate the process of breaking the prejudices. This cooperation is necessary for the barriers between the different nationalities and religions to be broken down, particularly after the 2001 conflict. The students, in the capacity of representatives from the high education institutions, have the responsibility to spread their knowledge and mutual tolerance among the Macedonian citizens.

D-r. Bardhi emphasized that with the help of this program many theological gaps will be bridged. The exchange of lectures proved to be successful method through which the characteristics of the religions will be properly explained, thus the knowledge of the future theologians will be upgraded.

The great number of questions raised at the lectures are the real indicator of the level of interest on the part of the students. In addition, the visits to the Theological educational institutions, the students get to know each other better. Aleksandar Krzalovski underlined that except for the activities conducted so far within the program, Info and Dialogue Centre is to be opened, as well visits to positive examples, summer camps, days of religious associations, training on project cycle management, seminars and workshops, Address book of the religious association, comparative studies and translations will be organized.

#### Activities at Theological Faculties

##### **Visit to the Cathedral**

On, 26 May 2004, around fifteen students of the Faculty of Islamic Studies led by the Dean, d-r. Ismail Bradhi, visited the St. Clement of Ohrid Church in Skopje. They were received by the Archpriest Dragi Kostadinovski, who presented the background and the architectural style of the church, also he offered some explanations of the orthodox religious symbols.

The students had an opportunity to look around the church, including the hall where the church concerts and priest synods take place. Kostadinovski elaborated on the role of the church and the functioning mode, as well as the significance of the service and the altar in the church.

Following the presentation by the host, the students had a chance to pose some questions in relation to the number of prayers during the day, the role of the woman in the Orthodox Christianity, as well as the days for rest (Sunday), when man is devoted to God. The visit was wrapped up with a cocktail organized by the employees in the church. The students were satisfied by the hospitality shown by the host and showed an interest for visit like this one to be organized in the future, as well. D-r. Islamil Bardhi expressed his impressions from the visit with these words: 'It was not the first time for me to visit a sacral object of other confession i.e. church. What I find amazing is the internal familiarity with the spots where the praying to God is conducted, for that reason those should be preserved as they are. Except for the interior of the church, the traditional religious serenity makes great impression too, thus it attaches greater importance, supra-national importance to the church. In these days, the man being burdened with problems, which were not even "conceivable" in the past, let alone to become everyday life, the holy places gain bigger importance. The churches and the mosques bear responsibility to create soul purification climate, to get rid of the fear and the personal madness, not to let the people go astray. In addition, they should promote family life, spiritual raising of the children, as well as philanthropy towards oneself and the other people.

The sacral objects in our country deserve to be taken better care of. They should be turned into

educational centers for young generations, ideological and spiritual centers with an aim to serve the one and only God. That is the reason why I have chosen to be theologian, I believe that the sacral objects possess the strength to attract the human soul. It has not been said in vain that the praying places, the shrines are centers of the world. Those are centers open to all the sides of the world. God loves the righteous men, the honest ones and those one who serve the good”.

The students of the FIS expressed their impressions as well: Nurten Nezim said “I am very happy to have visited the church, it gave me boost for furthering the cooperation”. Minur Hasani said: “We have come across spiritual atmosphere in the church itself”. Avni Neziri said: “I would like to commend the cooperation achieved so far. I think that the visit was very well organized, the reception by the priest and the other employees attest to that. I have learnt many things from our communication. I hope that the cooperation will not end here”. Munever Lutfiu said: “The behavior by the hosts made great impression on me, the respect they have shown”. “The visit was very useful for us. This visit represents one practical acquainting with the church, as well as with the dealings of the priests in the churches and with the people” noted Enes Misimi.

**Prepared by: Irsal Jakupi**

## Activities at the Theological Faculties

### **Visit to the Mustafa-Pasha Mosque**

One of the most representative objects of the Islamic architecture in Skopje is the Mustafa-Pasha Mosque. In an impressive and imposing manner, it has secured a place for itself as one of the most beautiful mosques in our country. It is located at the little hill crossways to the Skopje Citadel. On 9 June 2004, thirteen members and activists from five religious communities visited the Mustafa-Pasha Mosque. The President of the Mosque Board received the guests, together with the Professor Ahmed Sherif and the Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies, d-r. Ismail Bardhi.

As soon as the guests arrived, they could feel the positive atmosphere. They were invited for a tea in the courtyard of the mosque. A great interest was shown for the visit of the mosque, thus apart from the representatives from the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church, the Jewish Association, and the Evangelical-Methodist Church, other interested citizens took part, as well.

The Dean of the FIS, d-r. Dean Bardhi welcomed the guests and gave a short presentation of the background of the mosque. Namely, the Mustafa-Pasha Mosque was built in the last decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> c. by Mustafa Pasha, one of the highest officials in the Ottoman Empire. The professor of Islamic culture and civilization, d-r Ahmed Sheriff reflected, in short, on the architecture of the mosque, adding that little information are available as to who is the builder of the mosque.

In continuation, d-r. Ismail Bardhi informed about the sarcophagus built at the southern end of the mosque, believed to encase the grave of Umi, a daughter of Mustafa Pasha. The Dean Bardhi had a short word on the basic characteristics of the Islam, the rituals and the way they are carried out (underlining that it takes place five times per day), the prayers and their significance. Many questions followed, the visitors asked about the role of the woman in the Islam, the position of the mosque in the direction of Meka. In the meantime, the Imam called for prayer. The hosts invited us to watch the prayer's course of action. Most of the guests, being curious, accepted the invitation. Following the prayer, the Dean reflected on the interior of the mosque. The guests carried on with their discussions in the courtyard. The issue of the importance of this type of visits was raised, the participants were of an opinion that the visits to religious objects are very positive event, thus the wealth of our country is better appreciated. Through the mutual learning about the cultures, the customs and the religions, the people are drawn closer together and could understand each other better and communicate. The guests left in good mood, pointing out that their expectations of the visit were completely met. Getting to know the other people represents inherent part of our cultural life.

**Prepared by Dervisha Hadzic**

## Activities at the Theological faculties

### **Training on Project Cycle Management Takes Place**

This training is part of the activities within the program Inter-religious Cooperation in Macedonia

intended for strengthening the capacities of the churches and the religious associations in terms of socio-humanitarian work.

The training was attended by 16 representatives from many churches and religious associations: Macedonian Orthodox Church –“Milosrdie” Humanitarian organization, Islamic Religious Association, Catholic Church – “Macedonian Karitas” Humanitarian organization Evangelical-Methodist Church, Jewish Association in Macedonia, New Apostle Church and Vaisnav Religious Association. Two open debates were organized in addition to the regular training activities where the participants presented the work and the activities of the humanitarian organizations operating within the churches and the religious associations, as well as within the various religions, histories, and traditions. The participants expressed their impressions from the training: “The training was a chance for us to socialize and have fun. Any free moment was used for exchanging knowledge and experiences. Through representing our religious community and organization, we had a chance to recognize the differences and the similarities, the thing that draw us closer together, thus making the first step towards realizing that we are all the same. The things that unite us are the religion, some customs, rituals, beliefs, thus we have proved to ourselves that we belong to each other. In these moments, any of us has forgotten about our differences” said Irsal Jakupi.

“The concept of the training was superbly planned and put in practice, apart from dealing with contemporary and practical subject, fulfills the MCIC’s program objectives, as well. That is, we had an opportunity to live together for few days, socialize and exchange opinions and information with the representatives from other ethnic and religious communities” said Nikola V’ckov.

“It has not been the first time for me to attend a training of this type, however this was the first time to socialize with members of various religious associations. I am very glad for the make-up of the group being like this, because I had a chance to learn something more about my fellow citizens and members of other religious associations. At the same time, I was very glad that great interest was shown for the religious community I am coming from. I am of an opinion that the gatherings of this type should be turned into traditional” said Lepa Sadikario. “The training, organized by MCIC, was the first training for me of the project development type. Not only it has taught us how to develop projects, but also it has proven that we can sit down and work together on inter-religious and inter-ethnic projects, which would contribute to the further cooperation in other spheres and field of the life” said Husein Rizai. “What I know is that only through the love for God, we can overcome the ethnic and religious differences, this training brought it home to us” said Milica Poprizova. “This type of training, I have attended for the first time. Apart from the training activities on project cycle management, I had an opportunity to meet representatives from the other religious communities in Macedonia. This type of trainings could be largely beneficial in getting to know the other communities” – Toni Angelov.

**Prepared by: Olivera Jovanova, Irsal jakupi**

Trainings, workshops, and seminars

### **Round table on the Reforms of the Religious Educational System**

The round table “The conditions and the perspectives of the religious educational system within the Islamic religious community” is a gathering first of this kind held as part of the project workshops and seminars within the program Inter-religious cooperation in Macedonia (PRM), under the patronage of the Islamic religious community in RM (IRC), and organized by the Faculty of Islamic Studies.

Many religious workers and intellectuals from Macedonia, Albania, and Kosovo took part. They have made great contribution towards the raised issue through presenting their works and offering their ideas for the reforms of the religious educational system.

The gathering was opened by D-r. Ismail Bardhi, Dean of the FIS in Skopje. The participants were also greeted by H. Arif ef. Emini, President of the IRC and representatives from the Islamic religious communities of Republic of Albania and Kosovo.

In his introductory statement, Dr. Bardhi underlined that the problems faced by the religious education are in fact the same with the problems in the regular education. He expressed his doubt about the relevancy of the theology for the members of the religious communities and the civic society in general, today. In addition, he pointed to the risk of turning the intellectuals into “useless” intellectuals and thinkers who should express their opinion only when they are asked. In addition, he opened to discussion the efforts put in by the theologians, in particular the Islamic ones, to rise up to their theological duty and responsibility, as well as the response by the believers and the society in general.

In the view of Dr. Bardhi, the science and the theology should move ahead in concert, since for both of them the society is

operational field and the people are target group. The better future and the welfare of the people and the society are their shared goals.

The round table was consisted of two sessions where the participants presented their exposes. Their contribution towards the discussion gave the Academic Jasar Redzepagic from Pristine, Kosovo, Prof. Murtezan Islamili, Prof. Dr. Avzi Mustafa, Prof. Dr. Dzeladin Murati, Angelina Marku, M-r. Valbona Toska, Andris Stastoli from Tirane, Albania, Prof. Ekrem Simnica from Pristine, Kosovo, as well as other representatives from the Islamic religious community from Republic of Macedonia.

In the end, the following recommendations were adopted:

- IRC to draft a study of development of the religious educational system;
- More attention to be paid to the planning and the realization of the education in the Islamic educational institutions;
- The Faculty of Islamic Studies to be major bearer in the development of strategy for the high religious education and to follow the trends in the theology;
- Action plan to be developed with an aim of producing quality and competent human resources for the educational institutions of IRC;
- The gathering was declared closed by the President of IRC, h. Arif ef Emimi, who expressed his gratefulness to the participants and pointed out the importance of this gathering in the development process of the Islamic religious education.

Trainings, workshops and seminars

### **International Conference of the Orthodox Deaconship**

Upon the invitation of the Finish Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches in Geneva, the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation attended the conference. The conference was blessed by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, and it was hosted by Archbishop Leo – Head of the Finish Orthodox Church who opened the conference. The conference was supported by the Antioch Patriarchate Ignatius and several churches represented by their members.

The goal of the conference was to offer insight into the history, theology and the real condition of the orthodox cooperation in view of the social justice; to exchange experiences and methodologies and to stimulate new cooperation modes and exchange among the orthodox societal initiatives and organizations worldwide.

The conference as organized by humanitarian organization of the Finish Orthodox Church. Through keeping pace with the political changes in Eastern Europe in the last decade, the Orthodox and other churches have rediscovered their role in the society and have understood the significance of the social promotion.

The conference has gone along with two important events for the Orthodox churches in Europe. On 1 May, ten new countries have accessed the European Union. The following day, on 2 May in Paris, four new Orthodox Saints, strongly related to the social upheavals in the 20<sup>th</sup> c., were canonized. Mother Maria (Skobtsova), her son Jurij, Father Dimitry Clepnin and Ilija Fondaminski in 1930, having saved the Jews in France from executions, have been discovered and sent to Nazi concentration camps, where they have died. The key presentations at the conference were directed at revealing the theological and historical experience of the social action in the Orthodox Church. In their presentations, the participants reflected on the key problems and challenges in their work, including the professional standards, accountability and the relations with the wider civic society. In the end of the event, the organizations introduced the future committee, which has been founded with an aim to coordinate the future events, to consult the management of the Churches and the Orthodox organizations and to direct its work towards establishing associations of the Orthodox Deaconship.

**Prepared by: Dervisha Hadzic and Dejan Dimitrijevski**

Visit to Rome

### **Macedonia in Honor of Saint Cyril**

The manifestation “Macedonia in Honor of Saint Cyril” takes place every year in Rome, Italy.

On 24 May this year, within the ceremonious homage, the Macedonian delegation, headed by the President Mr. Branko Crvenkovski, accompanied by state and church representatives, met the Pope Joan Paul II. The delegation of the Macedonian Orthodox Church was headed by Metropolitan of Debar and Kicevo Diocese, Mr. Timothy and the Metropolitan of Struma Diocese, Mr. Nahum, the Catholic Church of Macedonia was represented by the Skopje Bishop Mr. Jaokim Herbut and Mr. Kiro Stojanov, Vicar Bishop.

In his address, the President Branko Crvenkovski has particularly underlined the activities undertaken by Republic of Macedonia in the direction of strengthening the inter-ethnic trust, religious tolerance, and cooperative life. On his part, the Pope Joan Paul II expressed his joy concerning the determination of Macedonia to move along the road of peace and reconciliation, emphasizing that the dialogue and the unity will allow Macedonia to make maximal use of its values in the accomplishment of welfare and prosperity in the country.

As soon as the meeting was concluded, on the Slav educators' holiday and equal-Apostles Ss. Cyril and Methodius, the clergymen from the Macedonian Orthodox Church held prayer service at the grave of St. Cyril found in the basilica dedicated to St. Clement. The Metropolitan Nahum and Metropolitan Tymotey headed the ceremonious religious service together with the archimandrite Poemen, proto-presbyter stavrophore Ljupcho Dvojakovski, father Saso Dodevski and archdeacon Arseney. With prayer songs in Macedonian language, the choir of the "Rusikum" college took part, under the conductorship of Ludvig Pihler.

In the greeting sermon, the metropolitan Tymotey reiterated the huge importance of the work of the holy brothers Cyril and Methodius, the great Slav educationalists, that earned them the title of European co-patrons, underlining that we ought to follow their message for coexistence in love, mutual respect and help.

**Prepared by: Prof. Goko Gorgevski**

Program Inter-religious Cooperation

### **Cooperation between the Theological Faculties**

What is the purpose of this Program?

IB: The Theological Faculties are the most important centers of development of the culture and the civilization. Unfortunately, the supposed glitter has remained gone out for a long time. The dust of forgetfulness and desolation are evident even today in the time of "freedom". As much as we should be happy about this program and the other programs of this type, at the same time we should be alarmed, since it has brought home to us what have we achieved and how much more can be done. The best aspect of this program is that in the present days, which we quite often tend to overlook, we respond to the theology and the theological culture and to the curiosity of the students who are in need of something like this.

JT: There was certain cooperation among the religious communities (mainly, at the head of the religious communities level), as well as among the respective educational institutions, in the past. The 2001 conflict brought about some kind of cooling off in the relations. The need for overcoming the stalemate has been more than evident, thus we consider that MCIC, having in mind its experience in management and implementation of similar projects, has turned out at the right moment to facilitate the advancement of the inter-religious cooperation, though it would have been much better if we did not found ourselves in need of such assistance. It is quite logical that the leading role in the project, MCIC will entrust to the extant high education theological institutions of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Islamic religious community, taking into account their relevant role in the training of the future staff.

What is your view of the implementation of the program so far?

IB: Above all, I would like to extend my thanks to the Dean of the Orthodox Theological Faculty, Jovan Takovski and to MCIC. We have tried to do good, with all our responsibility, to bridge the gap that has been here and we can see. The consultations between the two faculties, in association with the religious communities, including the Jewish community, Catholic Church, and United Methodist Church. I believe that we acted responsibly and that we work in the direction of accomplishing the goals set with this program.

JT: In my view, the realization of the program so far is very positive. When saying this, I take into

account the wise and constructive remarks by the Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Mr. Ismail Bardhi, and by the representatives from the other religious communities included in the project.

What would the advantages be to your education institution and the religious community from the program?

IB: I would like to point out that the Islamic religious communities of RM, i.e. the Faculty of Islamic Studies, have showed to be open institutions. It is beyond doubt that our Faculty has gained positive experience from the meetings and lectures. Particularly important is the understanding that it should have happened earlier. It is advantageous to the society in general and to the believers, which is in fact the goal of our Faculties and of the religious communities as well, irrespective of the material background.

JT: The exchange of professors – lecturers, as well as the organized mutual visits of the students to both of the Faculties has allowed for better and more competent familiarization of the students with the basic messages of the religion of the others, hence personal acquaintance that could help in confidence building and overcoming the possible negative prejudices. The history taught us that the dialogue among the representatives from different religions has existed since time immemorial. Where there is dialogue, solution can be more easily found for the emerging problems and misunderstandings. The worst scenario is absence of dialogue. The other activities foreseen with this program could also be beneficial.

What do you consider to be the most important aspect of the program and is there something lacking and what requires bigger attention?

IB: There is nothing that I would add to the program: the lectures have what it takes, the preparation of the texts and translations necessary for the dialogue and the comparative studies, then the mutual visits – all those have their significance. However, I do consider that more attention should be paid to the training of the staff necessary for the implementation of the projects of this type, more courses to be organized, and studies in the country and abroad. We have to look at the possibility of sending students and teachers abroad to attend similar courses, and post-graduate theological studies. The possibility of granting scholarships should be considered, despite the fact that MCIC is not involved in such matters.

JT: In my opinion, the very fact that the program has got underway and by and large moves forward is positive. The thing that matters, according to me, is the prospect of laying foundations for future cooperation without MCIC's assistance or anybody else's for that matter. Actually, the program itself foresees training of potential employees, through various courses, to be capable of assuming responsibility for the future cooperation.

Do you think that the cooperation and the communication among the religious communities will carry on at higher level?

IB: I am not in a position to talk in the name of the Islamic religious community of RM, since the community has its President, however as its employee and associate in this project, I have not perceived any obstacles surrounding the perspective for future cooperation among the religious communities. We can say that what was missing was a "will", coupled with the huge problems present in our society, which call to be addressed particularly by the religious communities, lead to a situation where the cooperation and communication stands at unsatisfying level. It is impossible for the Islamic religious community to think about direct and more often contacts when it is faced with the issue of denationalization of its property, taking on new employees and securing their position, maintenance of the religious objects in these difficult times and the like?

It is of essential importance that conditions are created for the religious communities to put on discussion the issues of purity of the religion and the "danger" coming with the democracy, particularly the secularization that creates tiring alienations for the tranquility of the soul, the family, and the religious culture on our part. This would ask for founding of higher mutual institutions, designed for more serious cooperation in the field of theological intellectual culture.

JT: I can not speak in the name of the MOC and the other religious communities as well, however I do hope that the cooperation in the future will be advanced and that good solutions will be found for the eventual mutual misunderstandings, as well as the problems surrounding the role of the religion in the society: the role and the status of the religious educational institutions and the issue of religious teachings in the schools etc. A competent and correct religious enlightenment can contribute largely to the moral restoration of the society – decrease of the criminal rate, drug

addiction and other similar evils that undermine the foundations of a healthy society.  
Prepared by: Dejan Dimitrijević and Irsal Jakupi

## Catholic Church

### **Annual Meeting of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)**

In organization by the JRS, annual meeting of the JRS from Southeastern Europe was organized at the premises of the Catholic Church in Ohrid, on 11-13 June, 2004. The meeting was attended by representatives from JRS in Belgium, Macedonia, Croatia, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Kosovo, Romania. The representatives from the indicated countries submitted reports on the activities and the conditions in the JRS from their region and exchanged experiences from the ground. The projects on mine-victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo were particularly examined. The Jesuit Refugee Service (**Jesin: Kegidee Setce**) is a Catholic Church organization based in Brussels – Belgium. JRS in Macedonia and Kosovo has been operational since 1999, in the refugee crisis in Kosovo, in particular. JRS has been successfully working on the project on mine-victims in Kosovo for a longer period of time already. This project has included 75 children from 7-24 years of age. JRS provides financial support to artificial limbs manufacture (among the mine victims, there are children who had lost both legs, many children who lost a hand or an eye) and other medical devices like spectacles for the children whose eyesight has been damaged from mine explosion. Also, for the children in poor health due to mine explosions, JRS provides the necessary medicaments. The Kosovo JRS team renders services to the children depending on their needs, like transport to different medical centers for medical check or therapies.

JRS covers the transportation fees of the children who attend school lessons. Special needs bathrooms have been built for several children, mine victims. JRS provides monthly food packages and schoolbooks for the poor children, mine-victims. Each year, JRS organizes summer camps, so far on the Adriatic Sea in Montenegro, however for the first time this year summer camp in Ohrid was organized from 21 June – 1 July. This year, 27 children will take part in the camp, accompanied by JRS project associates and several volunteers who will be at the service of the children.

The JRS in Macedonia represents logistical support for the JRS office in Kosovo. Upon the requirements in the projects on mine victims in Kosovo, artificial limbs are made in Skopje. Except for this important project on mine-victims in Kosovo, JRS in association with the Catholic Church in Macedonia, for a several years already, successfully organizes computer courses for high school pupils and students in Skopje, Strumitza, Nova Maala, Bogdanci and Gevgelija.

Since 1999, JRS has provided assistance for many people in trouble and we believe and pray for God's help to make the work of the JRS efficient in our region.

## Jewish community in RM

### **New President of JC**

Although the Jewish community in RM is small, it is still vital and full of life, which continues to live up until today with its impulsive character. Out of the events that marked the last three months, we can single out the election of new president of the Jewish community at the Annual Assembly, Mr. Zdravko Sami. He is the man to represent the community at state level and other instances in the next four years. The Governing board to work together with him is constituted of Prim. Dr. Miodrag Todorovic – Kozma, Rahamin Mizrahi, prof. Dr. Samuel Sadikario, Zaklina Muceva, Dr. Berta Romano- Nikolic, Ana Bosilkova. Viktor Mizrahi is the Coordinator of the Jewish community.

### **Activities of the Jewish community**

The Jewish community is exceptionally proud to announce that it has taken part in the Annual Council of the Jewish communities and that in cooperation with the Israel Embassy in Belgrade, has marked the Independence Day of Israel and the Holocaust Day. One more indicator of the vitality and leverage of our small, however strong and compact community, is the participation of our representatives at the meeting of the American Jewish Committee.

Within the overall work of the community, the organization of summer camps for the younger children is counted as well. Many children camps and youth camps designed for forging friendships will be organized, this year. The young members have been invited to participate at the following summer camps in Pirovac – Croatia, Kovacevci – Bilgaria and Sarvas – Hungary.

The organization of the festival "ESPERANCA" points to the enthusiastic work in the field of culture. This Sefard Jewish tradition, culture, music and other symbols are presented at the festival. Our community is exceptionally pleased to be able to take part, since a project by Jasminka Namiceva and Avi Kozma, under the title "Travel through the Macedonian Sefard Wealth" will be presented at the Festival.

**Prepared by: Hazan Avi Kozma**

United Methodist Church

### **Social Service of the United Methodist Church in Macedonia**

„What good does it do, my brothers, to say that there is faith, since there are no deeds? Can the faith save someone? If some brother or sister is naked and has no food, and some of you says: Go in peace, warm yourself and feed yourself, and you do not give them anything necessary for the body – what good? Thus, the faith without deeds is dead in itself”.

The 2:14–17 section of the Congregational Epistle by Joan the Apostle, offers account of what kind of believers does God wants us to be. The humanity is sublime, it calls for many sacrifices, so as to be able to help a man in trouble “The faith without deeds is dead” are words from the Bible that have charted the course of our church. Thus, faithful people have founded humanitarian organizations, social services that would render aid and assistance to people befallen by wars, epidemics, natural calamities etc. In this short introduction, we would like to come to the realization, in the words of Jesus “Look for the Kingdom of God and His Justice, as well as everything else will be added on” (Gospel by Mathew 6:33). The duty of the church is to preach the Gospel of the people and who is Jesus in their lives. Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth and the life, who believes in Me, would not die, he will have eternal life”.

The United Methodist Church, apart from the basic goal - the preaching of the Gospel, strives to make a difference in the social sphere as well. More than 120 years of service, it continues to exist. In those days, Bitola used to be open socio-educational center, where besides the girls' high school, a Shelter center for orphans had functioned. Among the many missionaries in social service in Macedonia, the most prominent was the American Miss. Ellen Stone. The center in Bitola had been closed down at the beginning of the World War II. After the collapse of SFR Yugoslavia., the UMC social service has been renovated and it strives to find solutions, to address the needs of the people, through aid in food, clothes, medicines and the like.

The social service has drawn attention of the foreign church institutions to the condition of the “St. Clement of Ohrid” in Novo Selo. Since 1991, UMC has assumed the entire responsibility of maintaining the school. The school has been donated school aids, textbooks, notebooks, pens, and pencils, erasers to meet the needs of the pupils with special needs. The derelict roof of the school was restored. The interior of the classrooms, the sanitary facilities were partially or completely restored. The social service of the UMC also encompasses the following activities:

- Support for the Rehabilitation Center in Bansko, with food, medicines, clothes;
- Support for the Psychiatric hospital in Negorci through replacing the old beds with new ones;
- Medical apparatus, orthopedic devices, medicines etc;
- The cardiology unit in the hospital in Strumitza has been renovated, also medical apparatus have been donated, orthopedic devices and other aid;
- In 2003, the Technical school “Nikola Karev” in Strumica was equipped with computers;
- The last five years, UMC provides recreating-teaching holiday in Ohrid for a group of 50 children, with special needs and orphans;
- The Kosovar Roma people residing in Macedonia are provided with basic living conditions: blankets, clothes, food, regular medical checks, medicines and other type of aid.

The social service within the United Methodist Church of Macedonia has been renamed in “Deaconship Macedonia” back in 2000. In the Kosovo refugee crisis in 1999, the UMC of Macedonia was engaged in several fields, through providing logistical and informative assistance, food for the refugees and the social cases, also church delegations paid visits to Kosovo and Albania. In the full swing of the refugee crisis, the Austrian government offered resources to the UMC of Macedonia for Social-medicine Center to be built in Strumitza. Once the location was found in 2000, the building got underway to o completed in the same year. The United Methodist Church of Macedonia made financial contribution to the building of the Center. The Deaconship



Macedonia holds its social activities in the "Miss Stone" center. In 2000, Mr. Mihail Pal, the consul of the Austrian Embassy in Macedonia, handed over the center to the UMC, represented by Mr. Mihail Cekov. The opening project was 'Food on Wheels" directed at elderly people, people with handicap, social cases etc, categories of people who are dependant on help by other people. Within this project, hot meal once per day is delivered to the people in their homes, the meals are packed in special containers, and it is done with special vehicle. The project "Food on Wheels" covers Strumitza and the neighboring area. The center functions very well.

The second project, initiated in 2003, is directed at socialization of the children with special needs. The children come to the center twice per week, with the help of their parents of course, where they undergo treatment designed for developing their independence.

Although the social work has been regularly present in the human society, however it is very important to strike the right time and the right place. We should all be grateful to God for that, since his love only can stir the generous hearts to wipe a tear and fill some heart with happiness. Glory to the Holy and Merciful God, now and forever!

**Prepared by: Milica Poprizova**

**Lexicon:**

Amen – derives from the Jewish word "amen" in translation "let it be so" or "true", it corroborates the previously stated.

Deaconship – The word "deacon" literally means servant. In the primordial church, seven deacons had been designated to serve in Jerusalem. Today, a deacon is a priesthood title, while deaconship designates the associate church services in terms of social and charity activities.

Ethics – a science dealing with the moral based on certain religious and philosophical understanding.

Islam – religion that was announced by the Great Allah to his missionary Mohamed.

Kabala – mystical teaching and interpretation of the Torah (fifth book of Moses) that emerged in the middle of the last century.

Catechism – in the early days of the Christianity, the teaching of the catechumen, the ones that had awaited the baptizing and the accession in the church. Today, it is used to designate the short-lived exposition to the Christian religion.

Koran – Holy Book where Allah had announced the Islam to Mohamed, to spread it among the people and teach them how to be happy in this and in the other world.

Religion – the spiritual connection between God and men, characterized with its dogma, cult, moral and religious community.

Theology – the science that interprets the truths of God, as well as the truths announced to the people by God.