

**REPORT OF THE METROPOLITAN
AUTUMN 2025 METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**
TEMPORARY CHANCERY OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
SPRINGFIELD, VIRGINIA
OCTOBER 8-9, 2025

- 1.0 **Welcome.** I welcome the members of the Metropolitan Council to our regular Autumn meeting here at the temporary chancery offices in Springfield. It is good to be with you in person as we devote ourselves to the sacred responsibilities which fall to this administrative body. We gather not exclusively for administrative deliberations but as one distinct expression of the unity of the Orthodox Church in America as she strives to fulfill her Apostolic work on this continent. Our part in this work indeed requires attention to administrative, legal, and financial matters, but our approach to these should be, above all, a “churchly” approach, one founded not merely on rational assessment and professional expertise (though these are welcome and necessary) but above all on our love for Jesus Christ, the one who gathers us together, our communion with the saints, and our communal participation in the spiritual and liturgical life of the Orthodox Church. As we know, this year marks the centennial of the falling asleep of one of the pillars of the Orthodox Church in America, Saint Tikhon, the Patriarch of Moscow and Enlightener of North America. We will mark his commemoration on his appointed feast day tomorrow with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at St. Luke’s Orthodox Church in McLean, Virginia. Saint Luke’s is a parish of the Archdiocese of Washington, and the liturgy will be celebrated in a newly constructed temple that was just consecrated in May of this year.
- 2.0 **Saint Tikhon’s vision.** Though our historical context might be quite different, we can look to Saint Tikhon as a model for us today. Both in America and in Russia, he was a unifying figure, a true leader who was faithful in maintaining the sacred order of the Church, strong in resisting schisms, and at the same time committed to conciliarity. One of the highlights of the most recent All-American Council was the presentation offered by Dr. Scott Kenworthy who reminded us of the transformative role Saint Tikhon played in his early life and in his service in North

America, even prior to his patriarchal leadership during the Bolshevik Revolution and Soviet persecution. Saint Tikhon's commitment to conciliarity and to encouraging the participation of the clergy and laity provided him with a unique experience as he later ascended the patriarchal throne during a time of persecution and the need to carefully navigate the relationship of the Church with the Soviet state. Here in North America, the Church has not had to pass through such difficult times. And yet, Saint Tikhon's approach can be instructive for us.

3.0 In his first sermon at his new cathedral in San Francisco in 1898, Saint Tikhon emphasized the principle of conciliarity in his leadership, stating: "My request for assistance I address, first of all, to my closest assistants, the pastors of the Aleutian church. I am entering this country for the first time, knowing it very little; while you have been laboring here for a long time, you have started earlier than I... My hope is that in my forthcoming service to you, you will be able to be of great service to me in your knowledge of this land and its people, and through your experience become, indeed, *co-laborers*, men of counsel and reason." Likewise, to the faithful, he spoke these words: "I ask for assistance and cooperation not only from the pastors, but also from my entire beloved flock. The Church of Christ is likened by the holy apostle Paul to a body, while a body has not one member but many. These have not one and the same function but each its own: the eye its own, and the arm its own. Each member is necessary and cannot be without the other, they all have concern for each other and there is no division in the body."

4.0 ***The All-American Council.*** Such an approach is what we see at work in our gathering here at the Metropolitan Council and at other Church-wide gatherings such as the All-American Council. The most recent of these, the 21st All-American Council, which was convened in Phoenix, Arizona, was, by the grace of God, a great success on a number of levels. I offer my gratitude to Protodeacon Peter, our Council Manager, the members of the Preconciliar Commission, our Council Chairs, the volunteers of the local committees and all who worked collaboratively with the chancery office in organizing a very successful All-American Council. The theme "Gathered Together by Christ," was a fitting reminder of the reality that it

is the Lord himself who gathers us together whenever we come together in his Name. It is in his Name that conducted the established business of the Council -- the consideration of all statutorily-required reports, elections to various Church-wide positions, and debate over resolutions and amendments. A statute amendment concerning the Pension Board, presented by the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of the South was debated and rejected by the delegates. Likewise, an amendment put forth by this body that would provide for fixed beginning and ending dates of service for newly elected diocesan representatives to the Metropolitan Council also did not pass. The failure to pass these amendments is an affirmation of the conciliar process at work, as was the successful adoption of other matters, such as a funding resolution for the next triennium and a resolution regarding the vetting of candidates for the Pension Board. The latter resolution directs the Metropolitan Council to establish this vetting process and to present it to the Holy Synod before their Fall 2027 session.

5.0 Other significant happenings at the All-American Council included a dinner which was held in honor of Archbishop Benjamin on the occasion of his retirement and the nomination by special assembly and election by the Holy Synod of a new bishop for the Diocese of the West to fill the see of San Francisco. We offer our gratitude to His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin for his many years of faithful archpastoral service and our prayers of encouragement to His Grace Bishop Vasily as he shoulders the mantle of episcopal ministry. The nomination and election of a new bishop are two of the signs of our responsibility as an autocephalous Orthodox Church. Other signs of this responsibility are the canonization of new saints and the recognition of other autocephalous Churches, both of which were highlights this year for the Orthodox Church in America.

6.0 ***New members elected at the All-American Council.*** Of course, one of the significant actions of the All-American Council is the election of six at-large delegates to the Metropolitan Council. I take the opportunity to welcome those who were so elected this past July in Phoenix:

- 6.1 *Archpriest Timothy Sawchak*, the rector of Holy Trinity Church in Overland Park, Kansas in the Diocese of the Midwest;
- 6.2 *Archpriest Sean Levine*, from the military chaplaincy of the Orthodox Church in America, who serves as Force Management Officer for the US Army Chief of Chaplains here at the Pentagon and who assists in various ways within the Archdiocese of Washington;
- 6.3 *Archpriest Christopher Foley*, rector of Holy Cross Church in Kernersville, North Carolina from the Diocese of the South, whom we welcome back for a second term;
- 6.4 *Matushka Miho Ochiai Ealy* from the parish of St. Paul the Apostle in Dayton, Ohio, where her husband, Fr. Gregory serves as Rector. Matushka Miho has faithfully served as one of the original members of the Clergy Wives Ministry of the Office of Pastoral Life and we are glad to have the voice and experience of the clergy wives here on the Metropolitan Council;
- 6.5 *Dr. Peter Bouteneff*, who is Professor of Systematic Theology, Kulik Professor of Sacred Arts, and Associate Dean for Institutional Mission and Engagement at the Orthodox Theological Seminary of Saint Vladimir; and
- 6.6 *Mr. David Lane* from the Diocese of the West who returns to the Metropolitan Council in this new role after having served as lay delegate from his diocese for the past three years.
- 6.7 I note here also that two alternates were elected at the All-American Council: Archpriest Justin Mathews from the Diocese of the Midwest and Alexis Liberovsky. Alex joins us today not as an alternate but at my invitation in order to assist us with the secretarial duties related to the Metropolitan Council, that is, for the taking of minutes, which he has experience doing for many years with faithfulness and, in addition, with attention to the history and patrimony of the Orthodox Church in America for which he continues to care as Archivist Emeritus.

7.0 ***New diocesan members.*** At this session, we also welcome a number of new diocesan delegates to the Metropolitan Council.

- 7.1 *Ms. Crystal Anastasia Dushkin* from the Diocese of Alaska;

- 7.2 *Deacon Marc Schmidt*, from Saint Nicholas Cathedral of the Bulgarian Diocese;
 - 7.3 *Priest Daniel Greeson*, Rector of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Burr Ridge, Illinois, my home parish as an Orthodox Christian, in the Diocese of the Midwest;
 - 7.4 *Matushka Mary Buletza-Breton* from the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, and who is well-known to this body from her service as chair of the Pension Board for many years;
 - 7.5 *Ms. Genevieve Lyday* from the Diocese of the South and currently a member of the Board of Trustees of Saint Vladimir's Seminary; and
 - 7.6 *Priest Andrew Smith*, Associate priest at the Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco.
- 8.0 We welcome all of you and look forward to your contributions on the Metropolitan Council. Since we have so many new members, I invite all of you to introduce yourselves or reacquaint yourselves with one another over the days of our meeting.
- 9.0 ***Travel and Activities.*** You have received the log of my activities since the time of our meeting in February. I will not go through that log in detail here but I would ask you to refer to it at your convenience to get a more comprehensive sense of my activities and visits. I will nevertheless highlight a few points regarding my activities and travel over the past months.
- 10.0 ***Canonization of Saint Olga.*** In June, the historic canonization (the first in 20 years for our Church) of Matushka Olga, now Saint Olga of Kwethluk, took place in Alaska. Along with many other bishops, I presided at the primary services in Kwethluk, with the celebration of the final panikhida, the vigil, and the Divine Liturgy. A large group of pilgrims from the diocese of Alaska and from throughout North America traveled to Kwethluk for this historic event held at Saint Nicholas Church on the Kuskokwim. With the other bishops and many of the same pilgrims, we then travelled to Saint Innocent Cathedral in Anchorage for a second celebration with a Vigil and Divine Liturgy at which the hymns to the new saint

were sung once again. In July, of course, a third capstone celebration at the All-American Council provided an opportunity for a representation of the entire Church to participate in the glorification of Saint Olga with the Vigil and Divine Liturgy offered in her honor and in the presence of her relics.

- 11.0 *Macedonian concelebration.*** Another significant event, one which I announced at the All-American Council, was the concelebration that took place at the beginning of September with His Beatitude, Archbishop Stefan of the Macedonian Orthodox Church – Ochrid Archbishopric. Six bishops of the Orthodox Church in America and a bishop representing the Serbian Orthodox Church concelebrated with the two primates at this historical liturgy at St Nicholas Cathedral in Washington, DC. This concelebration was significant for the Orthodox Church in America because it was an opportunity to formally respond to the Serbian Orthodox Church when they informed us of their action in granting autocephaly to the Macedonian Orthodox Church.
- 12.0 *Travel to other dioceses.*** As part of my responsibilities as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, I travel to other dioceses at the invitation of their bishop for various events or celebrations. At the beginning of May, I offered a talk at a symposium held in honor of the 10th anniversary of repose of Archimandrite Roman Braga at Holy Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction. Reflecting the growing sense of local veneration for Fr Roman, the Romanian Episcopate, at its most recent Congress, adopted a resolution to be presented to the Holy Synod with a request to initiate the process that would consider the sanctity of Fr. Roman. I will present that resolution to the Holy Synod next month and we will determine whether to initiate a process through the canonization commission. While in Phoenix for the All-American Council, I visited the Monastery of Saint John the Baptist, at which gathered a large number monks and nuns from the three sister communities. On the Sunday before the Council, I attended liturgy at Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church where His Eminence Archbishop Daniel presided at his former parish. In August, I travelled to San Francisco for the consecration of Bishop Vasily. The consecration took place at Holy Trinity Cathedral, at which I presided

with five bishops of the Orthodox Church in America and many guests from other jurisdictions. As part of my visit, I served for the feast of the Dormition at the Holy Assumption Monastery in Callistoga and the St Seraphim Cathedral in Santa Rosa. Most recently, I participated at the celebrations surrounding the 100th anniversary of pilgrimage at Fort Ross in California.

- 13.0 Stavropegial Institutions.** I continue to maintain a schedule of regular visits to my stavropegial institutions which include two seminaries and three monasteries. This year, Saint Vladimir's Seminary filled the vacancy in the position of President by electing Dr Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie. The Board of Trustees subsequently restored to Dr. Tudorie the title of Dean, and my own title was likewise restored to that of President of the Seminary. As such, I presently maintain the same title of President to reflect my oversight of both of our seminaries. For its part, Saint Tikhon's Seminary has broken ground on a major project of building married student housing with the expectation that 4-6 new units will be completed in time for next year's incoming class. I presided at the commencement exercises for both seminaries and, at the beginning of this academic year visited St Vladimir's for the Feast of the Nativity of the Mother of God and St Tikhon's for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. As is my custom, I spent the First Week of Great Lent in retreat at St. Tikhon's Monastery,
- 14.0 External Affairs.** My work in the area of external affairs encompasses a wide range of spheres including relations with the global Orthodox Churches, with the other Orthodox Churches on this continent, and with various ecumenical and civil organizations. I continue to participate in the Assembly of Bishops of the United States as a member of the Executive Committee (which meets on a quarterly basis) and as a participant in the annual Assembly. Last year's Assembly took place in Atlanta, Georgia, and this year's Assembly will take place in Denver, Colorado, at the beginning of November. On the local level, there were several Assembly activities, including Sunday of Orthodoxy services at Saint Catherine's Greek Orthodox Church in Falls Church (at which I was invited to offer the sermon). Most recently, I returned to Saint Catherine's for the Doxology that was offered in honor

of His All-Holiness, Patriarch Bartholomew during his recent visit to the United States. Of particular note, the Assembly has recently created a new award which is intended to honor laypeople who have been active in supporting the work of the Assembly. This year, two such laypeople are being honored: Ms. Anne Glynn Mackoul from the Antiochian Archdiocese and a former chair of the Board of Trustees at Saint Vladimir's Seminary and our own Judge E.R. Lanier, the long-serving General Counsel for the Orthodox Church in America. Each of them will be honored with the Medal of Saint Theodora.

15.0 Other Concelebrations. Earlier in the year, on April 7, I had occasion to serve with hierarchs of other Churches: Metropolitan Nicholas (ROCOR) and Bishop Matthew (Moscow Patriarchate) on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of repose of Saint Tikhon at St Nicholas Cathedral in New York City. In June, along with many members of our own Holy Synod, I welcomed Bishop Matthew again, along with Bishop James (ROCOR) for the glorification services of Saint Olga in Alaska, and once again this past weekend with Metropolitan Nicholas and other bishops of ROCOR, as well as Metropolitan Maximilian of Irkutsk for the celebrations at Fort Ross.

16.0 The Archdiocese of Washington. Much of my activity and travel is accomplished within the geographic boundaries of the Archdiocese of Washington. As you can see from my log of activities, I have the benefit of being able to serve at and visit my 11 parishes and missions on a regular basis. This has become much easier to accomplish since the physical relocation of the chancery and my residence to this area. In addition to these pastoral visits, I am moving forward with the process of integration of the chancery with the Archdiocese. At the most recent Assembly at the end of September, I articulated more fully a process which would see a more precise re-alignment of the de facto structure of the Archdiocese with the original intent of the Holy Synod's decisions in 1980 and 1981 when the Archdiocese was created as the primatial diocese. In those decisions, it was clearly understood that, while the territorial part of the Archdiocese (that is, the parishes and missions in this geographic area) was a central component, the other two

components – the military chaplaincy and the stavropegial institutions and clergy – were also intended to be part of the Archdiocese itself. I have initiated a process to more clearly define this situation which will necessitate an eventual revision of the Archdiocesan bylaws and may further require a Statute amendment.

- 17.0 *Activities in the Nation's Capital.*** The chancery relocation has opened up opportunities for more active involvement in activities in the nation's capital. In my last report, I mentioned a number of events and meetings which took place in January and February surrounding the March for Life and the Religious Freedom Summit. Thanks to some introductions by our own Metropolitan Council representative, Jonathan Pageau, I met with representatives of the National Prayer Breakfast Foundation. In March, I attended the installation of Robert Cardinal Mackelroy, the newly appointed Archbishop for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington. More recently, on September 16th, I was invited to a dinner at the US State Department which was held in honor of the visit of Patriarch Bartholomew.
- 18.0 *New Officers for the Orthodox Church in America.*** In December of last year, Archpriest Alexander Rentel offered his resignation as Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America, which I reluctantly accepted. Effective January 1, 2025, I assigned Fr. Alexander as Rector of Three Hierarchs Chapel where he continues to teach and serve as the Chief Operating Officer for Saint Vladimir's Seminary. I remain personally grateful to Fr. Alexander for his faithful and dedicated service as chancellor. I subsequently undertook a careful process of identifying a new chancellor, and with the endorsement of the Metropolitan Council and the confirmation of the Holy Synod, was pleased to appoint Fr. Alessandro Margheritino as Chancellor effective May 22 of this year. This appointment then necessitated a further search for a secretary and, also with the endorsement of the Metropolitan Council and the confirmation of the Holy Synod, I was likewise pleased to appoint Fr. David Bozeman as the new Secretary for the Orthodox Church in America, beginning on September 1. I look forward to working with my new Officers and the entire staff of the chancery as we move forward.

19.0 ***The Labors of the Chancery.*** The members of the Metropolitan Council are aware of the process that led to the appointment of a new Chancellor and Secretary. However, I would like to speak a little more about the great benefit that these appointments have brought to me as the Primate, to my office as a whole, and to the Orthodox Church in America. The past two years have been challenges from the point of view of the administration. The workload at the Chancery has increased, especially since the departure of Fr. Alexander Rentel and for many months, Fr. Alessandro had to bear the weight of filling two full-time positions as Acting Chancellor and Secretary, and then as Chancellor and Acting Secretary. His sacrificial service which is partially reflected in his report to the Metropolitan Council. But I would like to note that his report does not truly reflect the level of commitment and dedication that Fr. Alessandro brings to his position. I am personally grateful for Fr. Alessandro's tireless efforts which reflect his love for the Church and his devotion to the administrative life of the Orthodox Church in America.

20.0 ***Chancery challenges.*** As he indicated in his report, the addition of Fr. David Bozeman as our new Secretary has eased a lot of the strain of the past months. I would like to formally welcome Fr. David to his first meeting of the Metropolitan Council and I look forward to his contributions to the work of my office. Fr. David has already dived into the many aspects of the Secretary's position and has helped to bring a renewed energy within the chancery. Neither the reports of the Chancellor or of the Secretary can convey the amount of work that goes on at the Chancery – work that is not simply administrative but work which is above all pastoral, canonical, disciplinary, that is, very heavy for a small staff. I am grateful to our Officers, Fr. Alessandro, Fr. David, and Andrew Smith, our hard-working Treasurer, for the faithful and professional exercise of their ministries on behalf of the Church. I am also thankful for the equally dedicated labors of the other full-time staff, Fr. John Mikitish and Deacon Alexander Woodill as well as Mat. Jennifer Levine who assists in the office on a part-time basis. As with much of Church life, there is really no such thing as part-time work and I am grateful for

the support of everyone. But I say this not simply to offer my personal gratitude but encourage the members of this Metropolitan Council to recognize the tremendous amount of work and service that is being provided by a small group of individuals.

- 21.0 Departments and Offices.** Of course, there are many others who also contribute to these efforts, in the Office of Pastoral Life, in the work of our departments, in communications, and in legal matters. We will hear more about each of these during our meetings this week but I want to note my gratitude to Fr. Nicholas Solak, Fr. Thomas Soroka, Fr. Justin Patterson, Fr. Kyle Parrot and the many others who work with them in fulfilling the Apostolic work of the Church.
- 22.0 Conclusion.** In closing, I wanted to return to Saint Tikhon. Saint Tikhon was a true missionary and because-laborer with Christ in this mission of bringing the lost sheep into the fold. But he labored in a truly humble and deeply Christian manner. Contrasting the aggressive and self-aggrandizing ways of non-Orthodox missionaries, he points out that “Orthodox emissaries, on the other hand, act differently: they go to their holy task not in order that through it they might obtain glory among men, but in order they themselves might reap mercy from God as well as salvation for others. They do not trumpet their success before the whole world, and, indeed, do not ascribe success to themselves but to the power of God.” In another place he would add: “But most importantly, the Orthodox Church accomplishes her [missionary] task in silence, with humility and godliness, with an understanding of human frailty and divine power.”
- 23.0** I am grateful to all the members of the Metropolitan Council for their contributions to the quiet yet deeply meaningful witness of the Orthodox Church in America.