Report of the Metropolitan
Autumn 2026 Metropolitan Council

Springfield, Virginia
October 14-15, 2026

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2026
Report of the Metropolitan

Welcome and Remembrances

1. Welcome. I welcome the members of the Metropolitan Council to our regular Autumn session here in Springfield. It is good to be with you in person, although we expect that this will be the last time we gather here at the Hotel Belvoir. I will say more shortly about the acquisition of the new property, of which the members of this body are already aware, and I look forward to welcoming you there tomorrow after the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. For now, I will say that, wherever we may gather, in person or virtually, I am grateful for the personal and professional contribution that each of you brings to the Metropolitan Council. Thank you for your attention to the sacred responsibilities entrusted to you on behalf of the Orthodox Church in America.

2. New diocesan members. I welcome all the newer diocesan representatives to the Metropolitan Council, some of whom have already participated in our virtual meetings but are here in person for the first time, and others who have more recently been elected by their diocesan assemblies. I welcome each of you and, together with our returning representatives, look forward to our collaborative discussions on the important items on our agenda.

3. Departed. Before turning to the accomplishments of the past months, I ask us to remember those whom the Lord has called to Himself since we last gathered. There has been much talk throughout the Church of growth, of new missions and inquirers and catechumens, for which we are grateful. This increase is above all the fruit of God's grace, for it is God who gives the increase. At the same time, many of those who have gone before us contributed to this growth by planting and watering. Some built the Church in places where she had barely begun. Archpriest John Ealy, whose funeral took place on the second day of our Spring session, came to a mission of twelve souls near

Orlando in 1975 and served it for twenty-seven years, leaving a parish of more than one hundred and fifty and helping to establish Saint Justin the Martyr in Jacksonville. We offer our condolences to Fr. Gregory and our own Council member Matushka Miho. Matushka Louise Hill labored beside her husband, Fr. Myron, through his years as a mission priest across the Southeast, working as a nurse wherever his assignments took them and helping to found several churches along the way.

4. Others served long at the altar. In the Midwest, Archpriest Peter Bodnar, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, gave fifty years to the priesthood and brought many into the Faith, guided always by the words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). Hieromonk Basil (Castillo) served Holy Trinity Parish in Mexico faithfully until the day of his repose. Archpriest Joseph Gallick served parishes in Eastern Pennsylvania and, for more than two decades, the Albanian community in Natick. He was also the first Orthodox priest to serve as National Chaplain of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and he served faithfully as Assistant Dean of our Office of Military Chaplains. In the deacons Protodeacon John Wesner, Protodeacon Alexei Dupay of Saint Mary's Cathedral in Minneapolis, and Deacon Christopher Meholick of Western Pennsylvania, we remember those who served the holy altar and the people of God with constancy and joy.

5. Some served in the quiet of the monastery and the study. Monk Kyril (Yefimov) labored for nearly thirty years at Saint Tikhon's Monastery, tending its grounds and its bees, and earlier this week, Hieromonk Silouan fell asleep in the Lord at the Monastery of the Holy Archangels in Canones, New Mexico, after a prolonged battle with cancer. Hieromonk Alexis (Lisenko) gave the English-speaking Church the memoirs of Metropolitan Evlogy and was at work, at the end of his life, on the diary of Metropolitan Leonty, helping us, as the Church, to remember our own story. And some served within the households and communities that sustain the whole Church. Matushka Helen Psinka stood beside her husband for twenty-eight years at Saint John the Baptist in Campbell. Preoteasa Teodora Stoleru, taken from us at the age of forty-eight, devoted herself to the youth of Saint Anne in Jacksonville; we hold Fr. Stefan and their three children in our prayers. Barbara Drillock gave forty-two years to Saint Vladimir's Seminary, and generations of seminarians were fed at her table and watched over by her

care. Like the psalmist's fruitful vine, she saw many "olive plants round about" that table (Psalm 128:3).

6. As we are reminded in the book of Revelation, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). May we be inspired by their labors and works, and may their memory be eternal!

A Season of Growth

7. Log of Activities. You have received, as part of the report packet for this meeting, a categorized log of my travel and activities. I will not go through that log in detail here, but I am happy to answer questions about specific points at the conclusion of my report. Here I would like to note that, though my activities and travel have included many ecclesiastical, pastoral, and administrative challenges, the overarching trajectory has been one of growth and expansion. While much attention has been directed to the so-called "surge of catechumens and inquirers" and the weight of the challenges this brings to our clergy and our communities, I must say that, in all my travels and meetings, I am increasingly inspired by the energetic and enthusiastic response of our Church—and not merely a response, but a proactive stance taken by our clergy, our faithful, and our monastics. On the whole, I have witnessed, in these individuals and in their communities, not a shrinking before the many obstacles but rather an arising to meet them with renewed zeal and a more focused attention to the activities and programs that they offer.

8. Mission, Music, and Youth. The Orthodox Church in America has historically been dedicated to the expansion of her mission outreach, and we continue to strengthen our support of those efforts on several fronts, including the expansion of the Mission Planting Grants, the establishment of the Growing Spaces Grant, and our hoped-for reception of another significant Lilly grant for our New Churches Initiative. While we have not yet received word concerning the latter, we are confident that, having been invited to apply in a non-competitive manner, we have submitted a well-considered proposal. In the meantime, this body will be asked to consider this year's applicants for the Mission Planting and Growing Spaces grants. We also see solid and consistent

output in the area of liturgical music, which remains one of the most visited parts of our website. I am convinced that attention to all aspects of our liturgical life is key to the mission of our Church and means of grounding our increasingly digital lifestyle in the realities of the incarnation and divine worship. I see a longing for this incarnational foundation in our youth, for example, when I spoke to one of the CrossRoad summer programs at St Vladimir's Seminary. There is a desire for true community, real friendship, and authentic prayer among our youth and we would do well to follow this ourselves. It was also encouraging to see that seventeen young people took the opportunity this year to travel in pilgrimage to the Monastery of Suprasl in Poland, and I am pleased that the Orthodox Church in America was able to provide some financial support for this. I offer my thanks to all who have labored in these areas of mission, music, and youth, and above all to the Project Manager for the Departments, Fr. Justin Patterson.

9. The health of our clergy and their families. Within the Office of Pastoral Life, the Thriving in Ministry program and the Financial Health Initiative continue to provide avenues to strengthen our clergy in their pastoral ministries and to support their families. In addition, the Synaxis program offers clergy the opportunity both to learn and to engage in facilitated discussions with their brothers on a range of subjects. This year saw the first Church-wide clergy wives retreat, held at Antiochian Village at the end of July. And just two weeks ago, over one hundred clergy participated in the second Church-wide clergy retreat, once again held in Mundelein, Illinois. I offer my gratitude to Fr. Nicholas Solak, who labors unceasingly for the benefit of our clergy and their families, and through him I extend my thanks to all who assist him in the Office. I am confident that we can continue to strengthen our clergy and their families in their often difficult ministries. I also would note here the supreme value of in-person gatherings for our clergy and clergy wives, in spite of the ease of digital communication, which provide convenience, but also can overwhelm.

10. Our dioceses. As I travel throughout the Orthodox Church in America, I hear talk of both the challenges and the opportunities facing our parishes and dioceses. Although the particulars vary from region to region, there is a common recognition that, while the challenges are growing, so too is the will of the clergy and faithful to wrestle with them

positively, using the growing resources available to them. Over the summer, I traveled to Calgary, Alberta, for the Assembly of the Archdiocese of Canada and heard there the same acknowledgment of the challenges and the same excitement for the opportunities. At the same time, I saw and heard of the unique circumstances of our dioceses beyond the United States, in Canada to the north and Mexico to the south, where distance, language, and culture shape ministry in particular ways, yet where the faithful share the same zeal for the Gospel. Each of our dioceses, from Alaska to New England, offers something unique, and we must remain mindful and supportive of the breadth of our mission here in North America in all its varied expressions. At the same time, our present circumstances seem to be drawing us into greater unity with respect to our common mission.

A Place of Stability

11. A new and permanent primatial residence and chancery. I would like to express my tremendous excitement at the acquisition of our new property. For the entire Orthodox Church in America, it will have symbolic, historical, practical, and financial significance on many levels for the mission of our local Church. It is not simply a "new building." It provides a visible and concrete cornerstone for the whole project of integrating the Chancery within the Archdiocese of Washington. And, on a personal level, I very much look forward to having a permanent and dignified residence in such an ideal and convenient location next to my cathedral.

12. I see this as a significant moment in the life of the Orthodox Church in America, and I invite this Council to join me in expressing gratitude to the ever-memorable servants of God, Joseph and Theresa Domanick, through whose generosity this providential acquisition was possible. We are considering ways in which their bequest can be memorialized, so that there may be Church-wide acknowledgment of their gift and of their deep love for the Church. Another providential sign was given in that the official closing took place on September 25, the day on which we commemorate the Venerable Sergius of Radonezh, patron of the chancery chapel. We look forward to relocating the sacred objects from the Westwood property, including the iconostasis and altar table, and installing them in the new property.

13. The administration of the Church. This new property also serves as a visible expression of the growing stability of our Church administration. While many individuals have contributed to that effort, I especially want to convey my deepest gratitude to the three Officers of the Church, who have borne the weight of the labors that have brought us to this point. Their patience, perseverance, and support in this very complex undertaking have been an inspiration to me. I say this not simply with reference to the purchase of a physical building, but to what that building represents. We have had buildings to work in before, including the Westwood property on Long Island. This new property is significant because it lies within the geographic boundaries of the Archdiocese of Washington; because it stands near Saint Nicholas Cathedral, in our nation's capital; and because its significance is not limited to the United States but extends also to the other countries that form the fullness of our local Church, Canada and Mexico. A permanent home for the Primate and the Chancery testifies to the stability of the whole Church.

14. With my presence more securely established near the Cathedral, and with Fr. Alessandro and Fr. David, the Chancellor and the Secretary, attending more closely to the life of the Cathedral in addition to their responsibilities as Officers, we have confirmed a strong team, and I am confident that this team will do very good work in the service of the whole Church. I am grateful for the sacrificial service offered by Fr Alessandro, Fr. David, and Andrew, our three officers, as well as the significant contributions of our General Counsel, Mark Hamilton, the chair of our property committee, Greg Honshul, and all the members and consultants to that committee.

The Path Forward

15. A local Church. Where do we go from here? In his report to this body, the Chancellor notes the particular freedom the Orthodox Church in America possesses to devote herself to the mission of the Church: the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the building up of a truly local autocephalous Church on this continent. I would like to emphasize this point. Our autocephaly is not a privilege to be guarded but a responsibility to be exercised. It is given to us not as an end in itself, but so that the

Orthodox Church may become ever more fully at home in this land, and able to speak the Gospel clearly to the people God places before us, of every background and language.

16. The election of a bishop. This summer, I traveled to Jacksonville, Florida, for the special nominating assembly of the Diocese of the South. As was announced, His Grace Bishop Gerasim was unanimously nominated as the candidate for the See of Dallas, and I will present his name to the Holy Synod at its Autumn session in the first week of November. The election of a bishop is a sacred act that reveals our life as a local Church: clergy and faithful gathered in assembly, the Holy Synod discerning and electing, and the whole Church receiving her pastor. It is in such acts, more than in any declaration, that our life as a local Church is lived.

17. Communion with the Churches. In spite of geopolitical and ecclesiastical tensions, the Orthodox Church in America maintains her commitment to full communion with all the canonical autocephalous Orthodox Churches of the world. Although the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America has only made one major international journey over the past year, for the funeral of Patriarch Ilia II of Georgia, we continue to maintain that commitment in many ways.

18. Assembly of Bishops. More locally, the Assembly of Bishops of the United States convened its annual meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. These are visible signs of the mission of the Orthodox Church in America as a local autocephalous Church called to maintain communion with all the Orthodox Churches, not merely as a formality but as a living witness to the unity of Christ.

19. Sign language lexicon. Among the accomplishments of this year's Assembly was the approval of a lexicon of signs for Orthodox liturgical language, proposed by the Orthodox Christian Deaf Association. This work was spearheaded by the president of the OCDA, Savannah Foster, together with a dedicated board. Their presentation to the bishops was itself given in sign language and interpreted into spoken English for us, a moving reminder that the Gospel is meant to be heard and proclaimed by every member of the Body of Christ. It is also one example of the good work taking place within the Orthodox Church in America that is being recognized at the wider pan-Orthodox level, and I am grateful to all who labored on it.

20. Church unity. Yet communion and common work point beyond themselves. Church unity is not simply the common work of committees and bodies, nor simply the collaboration of jurisdictions. At a recent conference, Fr. Alexander Rentel of Saint Vladimir's Seminary recalled Fr. John Meyendorff's insight that the Church's canonical structures "were meant to serve unity, not create divisions." As good and beneficial as activity is, it is not sufficient to replace the more important work of achieving unity on the most fundamental level

21. Much of what I have reported to you today is activity: grants and programs, retreats and initiatives, a new property and a strengthened administration. All of it is good, and I give thanks for it. But its worth will be measured by whether it serves the unity of the Church: among our parishes and dioceses in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and among all the Orthodox on this continent. Many among us will lament the disunity of the Orthodox in this land but also acknowledge that we are united in faith. Our task, then, is not to manufacture a unity we lack, but to manifest the unity we have already been given.

Conclusion

22. I began this report by remembering those who planted and watered before us. The Apostle Paul writes, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). In that same passage, he rebukes the Corinthians for dividing themselves into parties: "For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" (1 Corinthians 3:4). The growth we are witnessing is God's gift, not our achievement, and it belongs to no party and no jurisdiction. And whatever we build, whether a chancery, a program, or a new mission, rests on a single foundation: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11).

23. As "labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9), may we build faithfully on that foundation, and may He who gives the increase bless the work that lies before us in these days.