

Assembly of Bishops responds to violence

NEW YORK, NY – On Friday, August 18, 2017, the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America issued a response to the recent racist violence in Charlottesville, VA. The text reads as follows.

“The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America stands with all people of good will in condemning the hateful violence and lamenting the loss of life that resulted from the shameful efforts to promote racial bigotry and white supremacist ideology in Charlottesville, Virginia.

“The Orthodox Church emphatically declares that it does not promote, protect or sanction participation in such reprehensible acts of hatred, racism, and discrimination, and proclaims that such beliefs and behaviors have no place in any community based in respect for the law and faith in a loving God.

“The essence of the Christian Gospel and the spirit of the Orthodox Tradition are entirely and self-evidently incompatible with ideologies that declare the superiority of any race over another. Our God shows no partiality or favoritism [Deuteronomy 10:17, Romans 2:11]. Our Lord Jesus Christ ‘broke down the dividing wall of hostility that had separated God from humans and humans from each other’

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Statement of the Holy Synod of Bishops on Recent Tragic Events in Charlottesville, VA

August 16, 2017

“For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the Church, Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” – *Colossians 1:16-18*.

To the Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America,

Recent tragic events in Charlottesville, Virginia, have highlighted the presence of un-Christian rhetoric and violent actions within our communities. At the same time, the response to these events by our civil leadership has unleashed a nationwide debate which has created a certain moral ambiguity, which in turn is fostering further division. Such a climate requires a clear response from the Church.

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America joins people of faith and good will across the United States, Canada and Mexico in unequivocally, unreservedly and unambiguously rejecting words and actions which perpetrate, support or encourage hatred, violence, racism, white supremacy, white nationalism or neo-Nazism. As Orthodox Christians, we believe that every human being is a child of God, created in His image and likeness, and therefore we are all brothers and sisters whatever our race, nationality or creed.

At the same time, we also reject the climate of condemnation of the individuals carrying out these heinous activities. Indeed, Jesus rebuked His disciples when they suggested that He violently retaliate against His enemies. “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them” [Luke 9:55-56]. The Church offers to all – without exception – not condemnation but a path to forgiveness and peace in Christ. As the prayer of confession says: “O Lord God, the Salvation of Thy servants, gracious, bountiful and long-suffering, Who forgives us concerning our evil deeds, and desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his way and live: Show Thy mercy upon Thy servants and grant unto them an image of repentance, forgiveness of sins, and deliverance, pardoning their every transgression, whether voluntary or involuntary.”

We reject hatred and violence, and as Orthodox Christians we are also committed to the ministry of reconciliation. We encourage our clergy and faithful to hold fast to the Christian message of healing, salvation and love offered by Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. At the same time, we exhort our clergy and faithful to reject any attempts by individuals or groups to claim for themselves the name of “Orthodox Christian” in order to promote racism, hatred, white supremacy, white nationalism or neo-Nazism. This is in keeping with the Holy Gospels, the decisions of the Holy Councils and the experience of the Saints.

We remind the faithful that the Orthodox Church in America does not restrict membership to those of a particular race or nationality and has historically welcomed all, going back to the Alaskan Mission which embraced the indigenous peoples of that land and continuing to this day in the multicultural and multi-ethnic context of North America. Brothers and sisters, Saint Justin Martyr, writing at a time when Christians were persecuted in the second century, said, “We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies.” May that same spirit be ours today as well. ■ **FULL STORY:** <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/holy-synod-of-bishops-issues-statement-on-recent-tragic-events-in-charlotte>

**Archpastoral Message of His Beatitude,
Metropolitan Tikhon on the Beginning of the
Ecclesiastical Year, the Day of Prayer for Creation**

September 1, 2017

To the Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America and to all who are suffering as a result of Hurricane Harvey,

It was on September 1, 1989 that His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios I of blessed memory, proclaimed the first day of the Ecclesiastical Year as a “Day of Prayer for Creation.” Since that day nearly 30 years ago, faithful the world over have offered prayers for creation, for its healing and good estate, for the welfare of those who inhabit it, and for the inspiration to serve as wise and faithful stewards of the many gifts and blessings God has so freely given to His People.

This message is especially poignant at this time in history, as we ponder the tragedy of Hurricane Harvey, which during the last week of August had devastated southeastern Texas and many other points along the Gulf Coast. The storm – considered to be the worst in US history – relentlessly visited the region with a record amount of rain, causing widespread flooding and other damage that in time will experience its own “healing.” Countless individuals and families – many of whom have lost everything as a result of the storm – are also in need of healing as they patiently pursue the means by which life might once again return to “normal.” And those who have lost their lives in the storm stand, above all, in our prayers, that they may receive eternal rest “where there is neither sickness, nor sorrow, nor sighing, but life everlasting.”

While grieving with those who have been devastated beyond measure by Hurricane Harvey and its lingering effects, we proclaim boldly the hope that our Lord, Jesus Christ, offers as He says, “Behold, I make all things new” [Revelation 21:5]. Our most compassionate God grieves with us as we pray for the renewal of ourselves and the creation of which we are called to be stewards. The unmatched assistance rendered by first responders and an endless array of volunteers, who continue to provide a supreme example of compassion for one’s neighbors, is a sign of God’s presence in the midst of tragedy. And, while all of us are called to intensify our prayers for the victims of Hurricane Harvey, we are likewise called upon to put our faith into action by contributing to organizations such as International Orthodox Christian Charities, whose representatives have been “on site” in Texas for several days. Those who are in a position to contribute in other ways – by collecting and delivering essential items, clothing, food and water, and cleaning supplies, for example, or by partnering with local and regional agencies – surely will play an important role in “making all things new” for those who otherwise might hold little hope in the days ahead.

And so our prayers for God’s creation have taken on a new meaning this year – one that is quite personal and immediate. Our thoughts and love are with those who have suffered – and who continue to suffer – as a result of Hurricane Harvey. Our faith, put into action, can truly “move mountains” as we grieve with those who suffer while revealing in our own lives and response that our Lord indeed is watching over them – and us – as He makes “all things new.”

May our loving and compassionate Creator bless us now and in the days to come, and may He inspire us to do all that we can, regardless of our personal circumstances, to bring about the renewal of His creation and His People!

With paternal love and blessings,

+ Tikhon

Archbishop of Washington

Metropolitan of All America and Canada

Primate of the Orthodox Church in America

■ **FULL STORY:** <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/metropolitan-tikhon-day-of-prayer-for-creation-hurricane-harvey>

A monthly digest highlighting news and features from the web site of the Orthodox Church in America – <http://oca.org> – published with the blessing of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon.

Parishes are kindly asked to duplicate and distribute **OCAreview**, especially to those without internet access.

August/September 2017

Fr. John Matusiak, Editor •
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Annual internal audit completed

SYOSSET, NY – The Audit Committee of the Orthodox Church in America met at the Chancery August 8-11, 2017 to conduct its annual internal audit of the OCA’s financial records and procedures.

The committee, which includes Reader John Skrobat, Chair; Matushka Theodora Blom and Subdeacon Dimitri Pletz, met extensively with Melanie Ringa and Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, Treasurer and Secretary of the OCA respectively. Their comprehensive work covered all activity since their last audit in the summer of 2016. The committee prepared a final report which will be presented to the Metropolitan Council during its September 20-22, 2017 session.

“The committee received the external auditors’ draft report for 2016, as well as the first and second quarter activity for 2017,” the report reads in part. “We were pleased to see the investment funds had reclaimed (and exceeded) their original principal value.... We were also pleased to see there was no interfund borrowing.”

“We are grateful to our Internal Audit Committee for the thorough job they do and for their dedication to the Church,” said Ms. Ringa. ■

FULL STORY: <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/audit-committee-completes-annual-internal-audit>

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Assembly of Bishops responds to violence

[Ephesians 2:14]. In Christ Jesus, the Church proclaims, there can be 'neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, but all are one' [Galatians 3:28]. Furthermore, we call on one another 'to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to expose them' [Ephesians 5:11]. And what is darkness if not hatred? 'The one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness' [1 John 2:11].

"Furthermore, in 1872, Hierarchs from around the world assembled in Constantinople and denounced all forms of xenophobia and chauvinism [*phyletism*]. They agreed that the promotion of racial or national supremacy and ethnic bias or dissension in the Church of Christ is to be censured as contrary to the sacred teachings of the Christian Gospel and the holy canons of the Church. It is formally condemned as heresy, the strongest category of false teaching.

"Finally, such actions as we have witnessed in recent days, by self-proclaimed white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and various racists and fascists, betray the core human values of love and solidarity. In this, we pray wholeheartedly for the families of those who lost their lives or suffered in these tragic events. In like manner, we cannot condone any form of revenge or retaliation by any group or individual. Therefore, we fervently appeal to every person of good will, and especially the leaders of our great nation, to consider and adopt ways of reconciling differences in order to rise above any and all discrimination in our history, our present, and our future." ■ **FULL STORY:** <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/assembly-of-bishops-responds-to-racist-violence-in-charlottesville-va>

Twenty-two clergy, lay leaders, complete Third OCA Mission School

HUNTINGTON, NY – Twenty-two clergy and lay leaders representing the dioceses of the Orthodox Church in America completed the third annual Mission School held on the campus of Immaculate Conception Seminary August 21-25, 2017.

"The school was organized with the blessing of the Holy Synod of Bishops and funded through a bequest to the OCA earmarked for missions and evangelism," said Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, OCA Secretary and Mission School organizer. "The week-long program offered an intensive study on the theory and practice of mission and evangelism."

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon and His Eminence, Archbishop Michael led discussions and fielded questions and answers. Other presenters, in addition to Father Eric, included Archpriests Chad Hatfield, Timothy Hojnicky, John Jillions, David Rucker, Thomas Soroka, and Steven Voytovich; Priest John Parker; Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak; and Matushka Jennifer Mosher. Topics included the theology of evangelism and mission, sacramental and liturgical practices in mission communities, developing catechism and education programs in missions, community building, engaging contemporary society, stewardship, and parish revitalization as mission.

To date, nearly 100 clergy and lay persons have completed the Mission School.

■ **FULL STORY:** <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/twenty-two-clergy-lay-leaders-complete-ocas-third-mission-school>

Record number of participants attend Fourth Small Parish Forum

NEW KENSINGTON, PA – A record 70 individuals from parishes across the US and Canada participated in the Small Parish Forum at Saint John the Baptist Church July 13-15, 2017.

Cosponsored by the Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania and the Diocese of the Midwest, the Forum had as its theme "Becoming a Community of Engagement." The program was facilitated by Joseph Kormos, Parish Development Ministry Leader for the Western PA Archdiocese. His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek and His Grace, Bishop Paul welcomed the participants and offered their insights throughout the three-day gathering. Other presenters included Archpriests Peter Baktis, Joshua Frigerio, Jonathan Proctor and Marc Vranes; Igumen Patrick [Carpenter]; Priests Jonathan Bannon and Justin Patterson; Mother Seraphima; and Janet Damian Lapko, Matt McCroskery and Cathy Vrugitz.

"An important product of the Forum was the development of a set of 'Principles of Vibrant Small Orthodox Parishes,' the final version of which will be available shortly," Mr. Kormos added. "We felt that building a consensus around fundamentals of healthy small churches was an important breakthrough." ■ **FULL STORY:** <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/fourth-small-parish-forum-attracts-record-number-of-participants>



Metropolitan Tikhon with Mission School participants after Divine Liturgy at St. Sergius Chapel.



Metropolitan Tikhon, Bishop Paul concelebrate at Glorification of St. Mardarije of Libertyville

LIBERTYVILLE, IL – His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon and His Grace, Bishop Paul of Chicago and the Midwest were among the hierarchs who concelebrated at the Glorification of Saint Mardarije at Saint Sava Serbian Orthodox Monastery here July 14-16, 2017. Presiding at the weekend's liturgical celebrations was His Holiness, Patriarch Irinej of Serbia.

Saint Mardarije – the first resident Serbian Orthodox hierarch in North America – personally established the monastery, in which he was interred after his repose in 1935. ■ **FULL STORY:** <https://oca.org/media/photos/metropolitan-tikhon-bishop-paul-concelebrate-at-glorification-of-st.-mardar>

Metropolitan Tikhon presides at 47th annual St. Herman Pilgrimage

KODIAK, AK – His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon presided at the 47th annual Saint Herman Pilgrimage here August 7-9, 2017. Also present for the liturgical services and festivities was His Grace, Bishop Daniel of Santa Rosa.

The pilgrimage opened on Monday evening, August 7, with the celebration of the Akathistos Hymn in honor of Saint Herman at Kodiak's Holy Resurrection Cathedral, in which his relics are enshrined. Inclement weather on the Feast of Saint Herman – August 9 – made it impossible to travel to Spruce Island, site of Saint Herman's original grave, for the Divine Liturgy. Metropolitan Tikhon presided and preached at the Liturgy at the cathedral. Pilgrims came from as far away as Russia for the celebration. ■ **FULL STORY:** <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/metropolitan-tikhon-presides-delivers-homily-at-47th-annual-st.-herman-pilgrimage>

Missions: Apply now for 2018 Church Planting Grants

SYOSSET, NY – Applications for 2018 Church Planting Grants are now being accepted by the Orthodox Church in America's Department of Evangelization.

"Grants of up to \$24,000.00 are awarded to first-year recipients," explained Priest John Parker, Department Chair. "Grants must be used to provide a salary for a full-time resident priest and must be matched by the qualifying mission, deanery, or diocese. Grants may be renewed for three years.

"Dozens of missions have received grants totaling over one million dollars since the program was initiated over 15 years ago," Father John added. "Most of these missions have successfully transitioned to full parish status."

Enquiries may be directed to Father John at 843-810-9350 or evangelization@oca.org. ■ **FULL STORY, APPLICATIONS:** <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/missions-invited-to-apply-for-2018-church-planting-grants>

Final study materials for Fr. Hopko's "The Orthodox Faith" series now available

SYOSSET, NY – The Orthodox Church in America's Department of Christian Education [DCE] recently released the fourth and final set of questions and answers developed to accompany the late Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko's series, *The Orthodox Faith*. The newly completed resources amplify Father Thomas' volume, *Worship*, according to Matushka Valerie Zahirsky, DCE Chair.

"As summer vacations end and fall approaches, many families will again be attending their home parishes regularly," Matushka Valerie said. "The second volume of Father Thomas' series – *Worship* – is especially useful for study at the beginning of the ecclesiastical year. It offers a close look at the Church's liturgical services, especially the Divine Liturgy, through 131 questions and answers and numerous points for further reflection." ■ **FULL STORY:** <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/completed-study-materials-for-fr.-hopkos-the-orthodox-faith-series-now-avail>

19th All-American Council site goes "live"

SYOSSET, NY – A special site featuring a wealth of information and resources related to the 19th All-American Council [AAC] of the Orthodox Church in America went "live" on Friday, July 14, 2017.

"The web site will be of tremendous assistance in preparing the faithful, and especially AAC delegates and observers, for the gathering, which will convene in Saint Louis, MO July 23-27, 2018," said Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, OCA Secretary. "A new AAC Facebook page also has been launched."

On-line registration for both the AAC and hotel will be available January 1, 2018 through a dedicated and secure section of the site.

"All AAC related resources – agenda, handbook, instructions and registration – will be available on the site, enabling participants to download and print out copies to bring with them to the Council," Father Eric explained. "Beginning January 1, the site will feature a dedicated section for submitting resolutions and Statute revisions for consideration by AAC delegates." ■ **FULL STORY:** <https://oca.org/news/headline-news/19th-all-american-council-web-site-goes-live>

In Memoriam

● **Daria Petrykowski**, former Chair of the OCA Department of Christian Education, long-time member of the Midwest Diocesan Council, member of the Board of ZOE for Life, and member of Holy Trinity Church, Parma, OH, fell asleep in the Lord on July 21, 2017. ■ <https://oca.org/in-memoriam/daria-petrykowski>

● **Deacon Bohdan A. Melnychenko**, 71, of Holy Trinity Church, St. Paul, MN, fell asleep in the Lord on August 15, 2017. ■ <https://oca.org/in-memoriam/deacon-bohdan-melnychenko>

● **Archpriest Leonte Simion Copacia, Jr.**, 85, retired Rector of St. Raphael Mission, Detroit, MI, fell asleep in the Lord on August 16, 2017. ■ <https://oca.org/in-memoriam/archpriest-leonte-simion-copacia-jr>