



ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA  
DIOCESE OF NEW YORK & NEW JERSEY

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September 1, 2016

Very Reverend, Reverend and Dear Fathers, and Beloved Faithful of our Diocesan Parishes:

*Christ is in our midst! – He is and ever shall be!*

Enclosed, please find two Resolutions which are being submitted for consideration, discussion, and voting upon, at the upcoming 2016 Diocesan Assembly on November 1-2, at Holy Trinity Church, Yonkers, New York. A description of each resolution follows.

**Resolution on “Implementing Proportional Giving as the Method of Financial Stewardship of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey”; Submitted by the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey**

As you know, the 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America, held July 20-24, 2015 in Atlanta, Georgia, voted to change the method of funding the ministries of the OCA from a fixed *per-capita* assessment to a Scripturally based proportional giving model. Consequently, it is incumbent on the Diocese to adopt a model of stewardship which reflects that transition. The content of this Resolution is consistent with the presentations and discussions that took place at the annual Parish Council Conferences, held in June 2016 in each of the three Deaneries of our Diocese.

**Resolution on “Adoption of the ‘Statement of the Holy Synod of the OCA on Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs Regarding Marriage’”; Submitted by the Diocesan By-Laws Committee and the Diocesan Legal Committee of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey**

The Holy Synod of the OCA issued the above referenced statement in June, 2016. The purpose of the Statement was to articulate the basic and fundamental beliefs of the Orthodox Church in America regarding marriage and to do so in terms which could be understood and applied by Federal, State, and local governmental officials. The content of the Resolution has been reviewed by canon law experts and an attorney and determined to be applicable and beneficial to the Diocese of New York and New Jersey and our parishes. The text of the Synod’s Statement is attached, behind the Resolution.

I ask that you prayerfully review these Resolutions in advance of the Diocesan Assembly and that your Clergy Delegate(s) and Lay Delegate(s) come to the Assembly prepared to hear, consider, discuss, and vote upon them. Be assured of my sincere gratitude for your attention to this matter and your faithful service to our Diocesan family.

With my prayers, my blessings, and my love,

*+ Michael*

**+ MICHAEL**

Archbishop of New York and the  
Diocese of New York and New Jersey

**RESOLUTION TO THE 2016 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY,  
DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY  
NOVEMBER 1-2, 2016; HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, YONKERS, NEW YORK**

**Submitted by the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey**

**IMPLEMENTING PROPORTIONAL GIVING AS THE METHOD OF FINANCIAL  
STEWARDSHIP OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY**

Whereas, the 18<sup>th</sup> All American Council acknowledged the importance of supporting the important role played by both the Dioceses of the Orthodox Church in America and the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America through committed stewardship; and

Whereas, each Diocese must determine how to support the life and mission of the Diocese as well as recognize its responsibility in supporting the work of the Holy Synod, the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America, and ministries which are carried out beyond Diocesan bounds, i.e. on a national level; and

Whereas, the Diocese of New York and New Jersey recognizes its place and role in the overall life of the Orthodox Church in America and its responsibility in expanding the Church's mission both locally and nationally; and

Whereas, each Diocese of the Orthodox Church in America has been encouraged to reevaluate the manner in which it attains the necessary means to support the work of the Church at all levels; and

Whereas the Diocese of New York and New Jersey understands and accepts its role in the overall stewardship of the Church, both locally and on the regional or national level;

It is hereby resolved that the Diocese of New York and New Jersey will exercise its stewardship of the Church, both the Diocese and the Orthodox Church in America as a whole, through a proportional manner of giving. This means that each parish of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey shall forward annually a percentage of its yearly parish income, which percentage shall be determined by the Diocesan Assembly or the Diocesan Council and confirmed by the Diocesan Bishop. This percentage shall exclude restricted, charity, pass-through and designated funds and shall be remitted proportionally on a monthly basis to the Treasurer of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey. The Treasurer will then distribute the Diocese's fair share of collected funds to the Chancery Office in Syosset for use for the entire Orthodox Church in America.

Any exceptions or exemptions to the parish financial obligation to the Diocese must be approved by the Diocesan Council on a case-by-case basis, in advance and in writing. Such exceptions or exemptions must be blessed by the Diocesan Bishop.

It is further resolved that this resolution be accepted by the Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey as an amendment to the Diocesan By-Laws, Article II, Section 6; Article III, Section 10, f; Article IV, Section 7,1; and Article VI, Section 6, replacing and supplanting said sections.

**RESOLUTION TO THE 2016 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY,  
DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY  
NOVEMBER 1-2, 2016; HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, YONKERS, NEW YORK**

**Submitted by the Diocesan By-Laws Committee and the Diocesan Legal Committee**

**ADOPTION OF THE “STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SYNOD OF THE OCA  
ON SINCERELY HELD RELIGIOUS BELIEFS REGARDING MARRIAGE”**

**INTRODUCTION TO RESOLUTION**

The Orthodox Church in America teaches and maintains as a sincerely held religious belief “that the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world and those who dwell therein.” (Psalm 24:1). The Church rejects the notion that there is a division between the material and spiritual world and that the two are somehow subject to separate and distinct moral and religious standards. It is for this reason that the resources of the Church – its property, its financial assets, and all that belongs to it of a material nature – may be used only for purposes and in ways consistent with the Church’s sincerely held religious beliefs and doctrines as reflected in Holy Scripture, the Tradition of the Church, the Holy Canons of the Church, and the encyclicals of our Holy Synod defining our faith, morals, and doctrines. The facilities of the Church may, in the sole discretion of the Church, be made available for use by other parties for activities consistent with the sincerely held religious beliefs of the Church and upon terms and conditions established by the Parish Council under guidelines approved by the Diocesan Bishop. Under no circumstances will such activities include those contrary to and incompatible with the sincerely held religious beliefs of the Church, including, but not limited to, events, services or receptions related to non-Orthodox sacraments (including weddings between persons of the same sex and related receptions), non-Orthodox worship services, and partisan political activities.

**RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE SINCERELY HELD RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THE  
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA AND OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW  
JERSEY AND ITS CONSTITUENT BODIES**

**Whereas**, on June 16, 2016, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, meeting at Holy Dormition Monastery, Rives Junction, Michigan, did adopt a statement of Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs and approved it for adoption by all dioceses, parishes, monasteries, and institutions of the Orthodox Church in America; and

**Whereas**, the Diocese of New York and New Jersey and its parishes, monasteries, and institutions are constituent bodies of the Orthodox Church in America; and

**Whereas**, the Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey, meeting in Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, Yonkers, New York, on November 1, 2016 and presided over by His Eminence, Archbishop MICHAEL, does preserve and promote the Orthodox Church in America’s sincerely held religious beliefs and doctrines as reflected in Holy Scripture, the Tradition of the Church, the Holy Canons of the Church, and the encyclicals of our Holy Synod defining our faith, morals, and doctrines;

**It is hereby resolved** that the Diocesan Assembly adopts the Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs (SHRB) document approved by the Holy Synod at its meeting on June 16, 2016.

**Further**, the Diocesan Assembly hereby adopts the following on behalf of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey and directs that all diocesan parishes, monasteries, and institutions do the same.

“The *(Name of the Parish/Hall/Facility)* is the property of the *(Name of the Parish / Institution / Monastery)*, a non-profit church organization located in *(Location)*. Due to sincerely held religious beliefs, documented in the Biblical, dogmatic and canonical documents of the Orthodox Church, we do not permit the *(Name of the Parish/Hall/Facility)* to be used for the following purposes: events, services or receptions related to non-Orthodox sacraments (including, but not limited to, baptisms, weddings or funerals); non-Orthodox worship services; and partisan political or social rallies.”



## **Statement of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America on Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs Regarding Marriage**

The following statement was approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America during a session of the Holy Synod on June 16, 2016 at Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery in Rives Junction, MI. It is approved for posting and use by all dioceses, parishes, institutions and monasteries of the Orthodox Church in America.

### **General Standard**

The Orthodox Church in America teaches and maintains as a sincerely held religious belief that God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman, and that all intimate sexual activity outside the marriage relationship, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is immoral, and therefore sin (Genesis 2:24-25; Exodus 20:14, 17, 22:19; Leviticus 18:22-23, 20:13, 15-16; Matthew 19:4-6, 9; Romans 1:18-31; I Corinthians 6:9-10, 15-20; I Timothy 1:8-11; Jude 7). This principle undergirds the teaching of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America that Marriage is the most perfect realization of love between a man and a woman in which two become one and in which love unites in such a way that two lives become one life in perfect harmony. We believe that God created the human race male and female and that all conduct with the intent to adopt a gender other than one's birth gender is immoral and therefore sin (Genesis 1:27; Deuteronomy 22:5). Marriage can only be between two people whose birth sex is male and female. The Orthodox Church's marriage service specifically states, "Establish them in the holy union which is from Thee. For in the beginning Thou didst make them male and female, and by Thee the woman is joined unto the man as a helper and for the procreation of the human race." Again the service states explicitly, "For by Thee is the husband joined unto the wife. Unite them in one mind; wed them into one flesh, granting to them of the fruit of the body, and the procreation of fair children."

The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America upholds and reaffirms such statements such as the July 2, 2013 *Synodal Affirmation of Marriage* (<http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/holy-synod/synodal-affirmation-of-the-mystery-of-marriage>); the July, 1992 Synodal Affirmations on Marriage, Family Life, Sexuality, and the Sanctity of Life (<http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/holy-synod/synodal-affirmations-on-marriage-family-sexuality-and-the-sanctity-of-life>); and other such statements and pastoral letters including the June 28, 2015 Statement on US Supreme Court Decision by His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon

(<http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/his-beatitude-metropolitan-tikhon/statement-concerning-june-26-us-supreme-court-decision>).

### **Facilities Use**

The Orthodox Church in America teaches and maintains as a sincerely held religious belief “that the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world and those who dwell therein.” (Psalm 24:1). The Church rejects the notion that there is a division between the material and spiritual world and that the two are somehow subject to separate and distinct moral and religious standards. It is for this reason that the resources of the Church – its property, its financial assets, and all that belongs to it of a material nature – may be used only for purposes and in ways consistent with the Church’s sincerely held religious beliefs and doctrines as reflected in Holy Scripture, the Tradition of the Church, the Holy Canons of the Church, and the encyclicals of our Holy Synod defining our faith, morals, and doctrines. The facilities of the Church may, in the sole discretion of the Church, be made available for use by other parties for activities consistent with the sincerely held religious beliefs of the Church and upon terms and conditions established by the Parish Council under guidelines approved by the diocesan bishop. Under no circumstances will such activities include those contrary to and incompatible with the sincerely held religious beliefs of the Church, including, but not limited to, events, services or receptions related to non-Orthodox sacraments (including weddings between persons of the same sex and related receptions), non-Orthodox worship services, and partisan political activities.