

Report of the Diocesan Background Check Administrator

Diocese of New York and New Jersey Diocesan Assembly

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Holy Annunciation Church, Brick, New Jersey

Your Eminence, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, brothers and sisters in Christ:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

In their Spring Session of 2017, the Holy Synod of Bishops revised the OCA's Guidelines on Background Checks, affecting both the scope of those required to be checked as well as the process for doing so.

This latter change was the most significant. Up until this point, parish rectors were tasked with finding a provider to run their background checks, compiling the checks from different sources (local police stations, school districts, professional associations, etc.), and storing them in their records.

The revisions made in 2017 changed this for the better. Now, background checks are done on a diocesan level, with one person as the point of contact for the process. They are obtained using a single provider, Protect My Ministry, which not only stores the records in electronic format, but regularly updates their search methods to ensure we meet the requirements of each state.

Following these revisions by the Holy Synod, His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, asked me to oversee the implementation of the new system for our Diocese. I am honored to serve in this capacity and help our Diocese in any way I can.

The background check process is simple. Once I have been given the name and email address of a parishioner who is applying to serve the church, they are entered into the system and sent an email instructing them to fill out an authorization form. Nothing can be done without the consent of the applicant, as they must not only agree to the check, but provide the information necessary to process it.

Once the authorization form has been filled out, I can order a background check. Background checks in New York consist of state and federal searches. County-specific searches are preferred, but the fees in this case make it impractical. In New Jersey the fees are lower, and so we include county-specific searches, and the results can take up to two or three business days.

In almost two years of running background checks, I have never seen an applicant with a serious offence on their record. I interpret this to mean that our rectors are good judges of character, and that having the background check process in place is a deterrent to those with criminal histories.

Our goal is that all parishes in the Diocese be 100% compliant with the new guidelines. We have made significant progress toward this goal, but there is still work to do. I ask all parish rectors to give their attention to this so that we can protect our Diocese, our parishes, our clergy, and, most importantly, our children.

With love in Christ,

Fr. Leonid Schmidt

Priest Leonid Schmidt

leonid.schmidt@christthesaviour.org

201.652.6633