



METROPOLITAN OF EASTERN AMERICA AND NEW YORK
FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA
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To Whom It May Concern:

It is my intent with this letter to dispel any lingering misunderstandings or, as have unfortunately been appearing, accusations regarding the situation at St. Nicholas Church in Red Bank, NJ. This is to be the final word on the matter.

When Archpriest Serge Lukianov was assigned to St. Nicholas Church in November 2007, the parish was without a priest for some time, with only about 12 parishioners. The church council consisted of two families, Pavel and Nadejda Mamyshev and Eugene and Olga Stoupine. For several years, the parish had no financial audits and did not submit any annual meeting reports. The church structure was in disrepair, to the extent that a random inspection by the municipality had found the structure unsuitable for use, and the certificate of occupancy was suspended. Within several months after Fr. Serge's arrival, the parish grew to over 75 members with a deacon, three readers, a full choir, a regular cycle of services and, critically, all of the structural repairs were rectified and approved by the city inspector.

Fr. Serge also corrected the financial situation at St. Nicholas by getting donations for new vestments, a Gospel, a chalice set, gold plating, new icons, liturgical books, and much more. Despite his having been appointed rector by Episcopal ukase, Nadejda Mamyshev, then parish treasurer, refused him access to the church's bank accounts and refused to add his signature to them, as is customary. When he did finally gain access via an Episcopal ukase, Fr. Serge found that the church bank account was listed under the personal address of Mrs. Mamyshev and not the church address, as is proper. Along with the former rector Archpriest Philip Petrovsky, who was still a signer on the account, Fr. Serge had the money transferred to a new account, under the Tax ID# of the Synod and in the name of St. Nicholas Church, as is proper and, in accordance with an Episcopal ukase, placed the church accounts under the stewardship of the Diocesan treasurer, Deacon Dimitry Temidis, until a new treasurer would be elected at the Parish Annual Meeting.

When the unfortunate conflict at St. Nicholas between Fr. Serge and the then-parish council became irreconcilable, Metropolitan Laurus of blessed memory assigned a commission at the bequest of Fr. Serge, headed by Archpriest George Larin, to investigate the matter. The commission requested a complete audit of all the church books, but the members of the church council refused to comply. The commission found there to be **absolutely no wrongdoing** on the part of Fr. Serge or Fr. Philip. Further, the commission recommended that, due to their harsh actions and irreconcilable attitudes over the course of the conflict and even prior to it, the Mamyshevs and Stoupines should be removed from their positions on the parish council.

In September of 2008 I sent Mr. and Mrs Mamyshev and Mr. and Mrs Stoupine an Episcopal Ukase that they return to me the church books, financial documents, and parish seal. Unfortunately, nothing was returned. I want to make it clear, as I have in the past, that I am grateful to the Mamyshevs and the Stoupines for their work and care for St. Nicholas Parish over the years. However, it should also be made clear that no church can ever belong exclusively to one particular group of people; every church is for the service of Christ's flock and must be obedient to its ruling Bishop, according to the Holy Canons. As such, the actions of the former parish council were and are totally unacceptable. Their disrespect toward and slander against anyone who disagrees with their version of the facts, shockingly including clergy, has become well-known, and has resulted in their being banned by me from Holy Communion for one year. Instead of repenting for their actions, they have undertaken a personal war of slander against Fr. Serge and Fr. Philip and purposely sown doubt and even fear among parishioners and acquaintances, some of whom, believing these malicious lies, have written terrible letters to Fr. Serge and to me personally.

This letter is my response. **Let it be known once and for all that Fr. Serge Lukianov and Fr. Philip Petrovsky have committed no crimes and broken no canons, but have, to the contrary, donated their time, money, and tireless efforts to the restoration and growth of St. Nicholas Church in Red Bank. I thank them both for their courage and obedience to me as their ruling Bishop.**

+ Metropolitan Hilarion

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