



The HOLY SYNOD
of the
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

To the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America:

In April 2003, the Holy Synod issued the Policies, Standards, and Procedures of the Orthodox Church in America on Sexual Misconduct (PSPs). A revised version of the PSPs was promulgated by the Holy Synod at its Fall 2013 session. At this time, on November 22, 2013, the Synod issued its “Pastoral Letter to the Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America regarding the New Policies, Standards, and Procedures of the Orthodox Church in America on Sexual Misconduct.” The present version of the PSPs was approved at the Synod’s March 2014 meeting. There is also an abbreviated form of the PSPs for parish use, issued in 2013 and most recently revised in September 2022.

Now, we write to commend once again the PSPs to our communities and institutions. First, it must be understood that compliance with the PSPs is mandatory for all who serve in the Church: hierarchs, clergy, seminarians, bearers of minor orders, council members, lay workers, and lay volunteers. Second, please remember that the PSPs are aimed, foremost, at preventing sexual misconduct. The PSPs do not exist merely to be consulted when an allegation is made; they should be used to shape a proactive stance toward potential misconduct. Both clergy and lay leadership should be familiar, at a minimum, with the abbreviated version of the PSPs, strictly following the directives of the Holy Synod outlined therein, with all due deference to the ultimate authority of the relevant ruling hierarchy, as the PSPs themselves express.

That said, as the Holy Synod affirmed in 2013, “While normative for the [Orthodox Church in America], the PSPs [are] a work in progress.” Periodic review of the PSPs is an important part of the work of our Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee (SMPAC).

The Holy Synod is grateful for the work of this committee as well as that of the Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA), which is the clearinghouse for the assessment and investigation of alleged misconduct. ORSMA further works to support complainants, victims, and also those who are falsely accused. The work of SMPAC and ORSMA is often unpleasant and sometimes dark, but it is necessary to ensure safety and accountability in our churches.

However, the vast majority of the work that goes into preventing sexual misconduct takes place at the parish level through education, vigilance, and compliance. The Holy Synod thanks all of our clergy and laity who have spent countless hours over the past ten years to ensure compliance with the revised PSPs.

With that said, the work of sexual misconduct prevention is never finished, and moving forward, the Holy Synod exhorts all leaders in the Church, clergy and lay, to continue to do their own part in ensuring this safety and accountability through familiarity with and careful adherence to the PSPs blessed by the Holy Synod.

As a final reminder, an important part of this cooperative work is the timely completion of annual Parish Compliance Reports, to be submitted through diocesan organs.

We conclude by noting that the PSPs and additional resources dealing with preventing and addressing sexual misconduct can be found online at www.oca.org:
<https://www.oca.org/about/sexual-misconduct>.

While no policy can defeat human sin or completely blot out its effects—only the Power of God, Christ himself, can do so—careful adherence to the PSPs and similar policies, combined with education, prudence, vigilance, and a culture of safety and compliance, can make our parishes safer and contribute to the well-being of the Church and her faithful during our sojourn in this fallen and temporal world. May God bless you all in your efforts to help preserve the safety of our communities, unto the upbuilding of the kingdom and the everlasting glory of God.

Yours in Christ,



+TIKHON

Archbishop of Washington, Metropolitan of All America and Canada



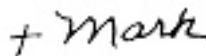
+NATHANIEL

Archbishop of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate



+BENJAMIN

Archbishop of San Francisco and the West



+MARK

Archbishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania



+ALEJO

Archbishop of Mexico City and Mexico



+MELCHISEDEK

Archbishop of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania



+IRÉNÉE

Archbishop of Ottawa and the Archdiocese of Canada



+MICHAEL

Archbishop of New York and New York and New Jersey



+ALEXANDER

Archbishop of Dallas, the South and Bulgarian Diocese



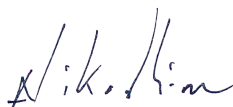
+DANIEL

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest



+ALEXEI

Bishop of Sitka and Alaska



+NIKODHIM

Bishop of Boston and the Albanian Archdiocese