



## GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS<sup>OF</sup> DENVER

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June 7, 2011

Reverend Michael Kouremetis, Proistamenos,  
Reverend Matthew Gilbert, Proistamenos, and  
The Faithful Laity of  
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, Salt Lake City, Utah, and  
Prophet Elias Greek Orthodox Church, Holladay, Utah

Beloved in the Lord,

As we approach the final Great Feast and celebration of Pentecost which completes the liturgical season comprising Great Lent, Holy Week, Pascha, and the Pentecostarion, the time has come to put all matters regarding the Church of Christ in Salt Lake City in good and proper canonical order.

Please allow me to review certain critical matters regarding the Sacred Tradition of our holy, Orthodox Faith which concern the life of all parishes, at all places in the world, and in all centuries of the Christian era.

First, it is critical to understand that the Church has always been a hierarchical Church, united under its bishops who are the successors to the Holy Apostles.

This is not some new concept, but it dates to the very first centuries of the Church. For example, Saint Ignatius of Antioch, writing to the faithful in Smyrna ca. AD 110 states: "Wherever the bishop shall appear, there let the people also be; even as, wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Church." Similarly, Saint Cyprian of Carthage writes to his flock ca. AD 250: "The Church does not withdraw from Christ, and the people united to their Bishop and the flock clinging to their shepherd are the Church."

The identity of the Church as one flock with one shepherd, has always been the foundational principle in the holy Canons. This reality was reflected in the Second Canon of the Second Ecumenical Council held at Constantinople in AD 381, which states: "The bishops are not to go beyond their dioceses to churches lying outside of their bounds." The same canonical principle was the basis for the statement made over sixteen centuries later at the meeting of the Eparchial Synod of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America on March 16 and 17, 2011: It was noted by all the Members that the responsibility of shepherding the parishes in each Holy Metropolis of the Holy Archdiocese belongs to the respective Hierarch who shepherds them according to the order of the Church, her Canons, the Charter and the Regulations of the Holy Archdiocese.

In practical matters concerning the Orthodox Church in Salt Lake City this means that you have one hierarch, the Metropolitan of Denver. The Church in Salt Lake City therefore consists of the faithful people united to their Metropolitan. In other words, there is one shepherd and one flock, one Church and its one bishop.

As the Eparchial Synod reiterated, it is I alone as the Metropolitan of Denver who have exclusive canonical authority over the Orthodox flock throughout this Metropolis, which includes Salt Lake City.

It would be a gross violation of twenty centuries of our Church tradition for any other hierarchy to interfere in my assigned Metropolis, and no Orthodox hierarchy would even conceive of doing so. Yet, I do not act on my own, but I always refer to the consistent tradition of our Church and reflect the common consensus of my brother hierarchs in our Eparchial Synod.

Second, it is essential for all of us to understand that the Church in America functions as one Archdiocese. There are not separate rules for different parishes or for the various metropolises. We express our unity in Christ first and foremost at the Divine Liturgy which is our common worship, but we also do so in day-to-day matters by following a common set of administrative regulations that apply identically to every parish. These are referred to as the Uniform Parish Regulations of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Just as I do not "do things on my own" so our parishes do not have separate sets of regulations. We are not like the heterodox congregational churches that exist in America which, according to a United Nations estimate, today comprise over 25,000 separate independent denominations in this country alone.

It is regrettable that the Orthodox faithful in Salt Lake City have been misled by some to believe that the ecclesiastical circumstances there are unique and thus that the Uniform Parish Regulations, not to mention the 2,000 year old traditions of our faith, do not apply.

For the sake of unity and harmony within the greater community in Salt Lake City, it is time for the Church to move forward in the spirit of Christ our Lord and to focus on why the Church is in the world.

Accordingly, I am directing your priests to convene a Special Parish Assembly of the faithful from both parishes on Wednesday evening, June 22, 2011. I am also sending my Chancellor, the Reverend Luke Uhl, as my personal representative to be present with you.

The agenda for this Special Parish Assembly is straightforward foundational. There are four items for you to approve:

- a. Formal acceptance of the Uniform Parish Regulations of the Archdiocese,
- b. Formal recognition of the names of the two existing churches,
- c. Restoration of the sacred names of the Holy Trinity and Prophet Elias,

d. Amend the present articles of incorporation within the State of Utah acknowledging the Archdiocese Regulations and the original name of the Holy Trinity which was first incorporated over one hundred years ago, as well as the name of the Prophet Elias.

There is no Greek Orthodox parish that is not under the Uniform Parish Regulations, and there is therefore no need for discussion regarding this agenda. You simply accept the Regulations, so that there will be no confusion or misunderstanding on the part of any and all who may be concerned regarding the ecclesiastical status of the Church in Salt Lake City.

As I have mentioned in previous letters to the current Parish Council, any separation of the two churches will be done in an orderly manner with written documentation in harmony with the teachings of our Church which has preserved the concept of monogamy in all things.

Finally, the current continuing parish council members have served well and ably these past few months. It has not been fair for these few individuals to bear the full burden of your combined community. In accordance with the Uniform Parish Regulations (Article 24, Section 5c), I am requesting that the Parish Council submit to me the names of current, contributing members in good standing who will accept to serve on the current Council until December 31, 2011, so as to complete the full number of Parish Council members. These individuals are to be voted on by the current Parish Council and forwarded to me for approval and ratification.

As your bishop, I look forward to receiving the report from Father Luke about the Special Parish Assembly in Salt Lake City. I also look forward to your continued progress in Christ, for the spiritual edification and sanctification of the faithful Greek Orthodox Christians in greater Salt Lake City.

With Paternal Blessings,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

✠ Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver