

# An Open Letter to the Orthodox Church of America

## Responding to the Synod's Allegations about Metropolitan Jonah

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What follows is a summary based on my understanding of the events that led to the OCA's Synod demand that Metropolitan Jonah resign. This is the story as I have pieced it together, taken from various news sources and first-hand accounts from witnesses. What I have learned in my research is contained within the following pages.

My conclusion is that the reasons given by the Synod for the forced resignation of Metropolitan Jonah are based on serious distortions and misperceptions, rather than on truth. Please take some time to review the following detailed analysis of the facts.

Thank you for taking the time to read through this summary. I welcome all comments at my email address: [christinefevronia2012@gmail.com](mailto:christinefevronia2012@gmail.com). This document is much easier to read in print, so if you'd like a .pdf copy, please send me an email. It is important to note that Metropolitan Jonah has had nothing to do with the creation of this document, nor does he know of its existence.

Lord have mercy on me, a sinner.

Christine Fevronia

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### INTRODUCTION

Fr. Jonah was enthroned as Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church of America in November 2008, the third such Metropolitan of the autocephalous Orthodox Church of America (OCA), preceded by Metropolitan Theodosius Lazor (served 1977-2002), and Metropolitan Herman Swaiko (served 2002-2008).[i]

Prior to his elevation as Metropolitan of the OCA, Metropolitan Jonah received two Master's degrees (Master's of Divinity, 1985; Master's of Theology, 1988), joined Valaam Monastery in Russia, and was tonsured a Hieromonk in 1994. He served as Abbot of St. John's Monastery for 12 years. He went from Abbot to Auxiliary Bishop to Bishop to Metropolitan in just one month.

“In the spring of 2008, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America elevated Fr. Jonah to the rank of Archimandrite and he was given the obedience to leave the monastery and take on the responsibilities of auxiliary bishop and chancellor for the Diocese of the South. Metropolitan Jonah's episcopal election took place on September 4, 2008, at an extraordinary meeting of the Holy Synod of

Bishops. Earlier in the summer, his candidacy was endorsed by the Diocese of the South's Diocesan Council, shortly after he had participated in the diocese's annual assembly. Metropolitan Jonah was consecrated Bishop of Fort Worth and Auxiliary Bishop of the Diocese of the South, at St. Seraphim Cathedral, Dallas, TX, on Saturday, November 1, 2008. On Wednesday, November 12, 2008, he was elected Archbishop of Washington and New York and Metropolitan of All America and Canada at the 15th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America, in Pittsburgh, PA.”[ii]

Prior to the All-American Council meeting in 2008, the OCA conducted various “town hall” meetings around the country sponsored by the Preconciliar Commission, and minutes from those meetings show the level of dissatisfaction with the OCA hierarchy prior to Metropolitan Jonah's enthronement.

Metropolitan Jonah was given leadership of a church that was fraught with scandal and corruption. Financial scandals plagued the two former Metropolitans, and criminal accusations plagued his predecessor Metropolitan Herman and the staff at Syosset.

Metropolitan Jonah jumped into his new role with a great deal of travel, concelebrating Divine Liturgy with various hierarchs and clergy around the world. His outspoken conservative stance on traditional marriage and the protection of the unborn endeared many Orthodox Christians to him, not just from the OCA but from other Orthodox jurisdictions as well. He settled into the Metropolitan's official residence in Syosset, New York, where the Chancery of the OCA is located. Within one year, he had transitioned from serving as the Abbot of a small monastery, to serving as a Bishop of the South, to serving as the head of the Orthodox Church of America.

### **SIC and SMPAC**

Metropolitan Jonah began his tenure as Primate with a number of open and unresolved legal issues dealing with financial crimes and sexual misconduct. There were three specific instances of clergy sexual misconduct cases that Metropolitan Jonah was immediately faced with when he became the Metropolitan of the OCA. The manner in which Metropolitan Jonah decided to handle these three sexual misconduct cases was the grounds for the Synod to ultimately force his resignation. The Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee (SMPAC) gave their perception on how Metropolitan Jonah handled these three specific cases. In their Memorandum dated February 10, 2011 they summarized:

...A main and central issue is the response of His Beatitude to cases of clergy sexual misconduct. His response often appears to be either indifference or in deliberate conflict with the decisions of the Holy Synod, with the OCA's Best Practices, and with other established policies and procedures (including the Sexual Misconduct Policies). His Beatitude's responses often seem to be based on his personal choices and ideas, rather than on sound pastoral, ethical, and legal considerations... In this Memorandum, we offer instances in which His Beatitude's critical lapses in judgment and actions caused further deterioration in certain situations, caused potentially irreversible harm to all involved, and prevented a fitting resolution to the problem... The cases we have detailed in this Memorandum have been selected because they serve as concrete examples of what we have come to see not just as mistakes by His Beatitude, but rather as an unchanging pattern of deliberate behavior that has not benefited from lessons learned and will also negatively affect the OCA as a whole.[iii]

This Memorandum outlines what SMPAC deems to be clear evidence to show Metropolitan Jonah’s mishandling of three specific instances of clergy sexual misconduct. The three cases deal with: 1) Fr. Isidore Brittain, 2) Fr. Simeon Kharon, and 3) Archbishop Seraphim. I have been deeply disturbed to read the OCA’s accusations about Metropolitan Jonah’s handling of these three cases, as I have found nothing that indicates his actions were less than acceptable for all three cases--and certainly not grounds for termination.

There are few facts in the SMPAC Memorandum. There is a lot of verbage and carefully crafted rhetoric that gets the point across that the SMPAC is clearly upset with the Metropolitan. And yet, there is very little if no proof offered for any of their allegations. It is this point that disturbs me the most. The Memorandum seems to be a summation of their opinions about how Metropolitan Jonah has handled these three cases, without backup evidence or documentation shown to prove any of their allegations.

The SMPAC wrote on the first page of their Memorandum: “In order to generate a readable document in a timely manner, citations and footnotes are not included; however, all of the facts and observations contained herein are based on documentary evidence available in the OCA Chancery and/or on verifiable, trustworthy statements.”[iv] This is unacceptable for an official church document. Assertions of the nature made within the Memorandum must be verifiable.

There are virtually no dates in the Memorandum. This leaves the reader to wonder about the timeline of their presentation of events. It is nearly impossible to figure out the sequence of events as presented. Even Metropolitan Jonah, in his response to this Memorandum, describes how he disagrees with the timeline of events as presented. This is also unacceptable.

This is the document that fueled the Synod’s request for Metropolitan Jonah to either commit himself for six months to a psychiatric inpatient facility, or to resign. It is full of innuendo but short on facts, full of ennui but lacking in substance, overflowing with rhetoric but not containing the evidence for their case.

Regarding the structure of these two committees—the “Special Investigation Committee” (SIC), and the “Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee” (SMPAC)...

The SIC membership in 2010 who wrote the report to the Synod “Regarding Allegations of Misconduct by Hieromonk Simeon” dated November 16, 2010, was: Bishop Michael of New York (who had been made Bishop of New York and New Jersey in September 2009), Fr. Alexander Garklavs (Chancellor of the OCA), Fr. Gregory Safchuk (Chancellor of the Diocese of Washington, D.C.), and Dr. Nikita Eike (a psychiatrist who serves on the OCA Ethics Committee).

The SMPAC membership composition who, a mere three months later, issued their Memorandum “Report Regarding Handling of Cases and Allegations of Sexual Misconduct”, dated February 10, 2011, was: Chancellor Alexander Garklavs (also on SIC), Dr. Nikita Eike (also on SIC), Fr. Eric Tosi, Fr. Michael Matsko, Fr. Theodore Bobosh, Deacon Peter Danilchick, and attorney James Spencer.

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**REVIEW OF THREE CASES IN THE SMPAC MEMORANDUM**

Let us review the three cases outlined in the SIC Report and the SMPAC Memorandum together, and if I have come to the wrong conclusion, I humbly ask for correction.

## **CASE 1: FR. ISIDORE BRITTAIN**

### **Case #1: Fr. Isidore Brittain. Background**

The first of three cases deals with Fr. Isidore Brittain, former priest of the OCA in Kodiak, Alaska. Mr. Paul Sidebottom had served at St. Herman's Seminary (Kodiak, Alaska) as the Dean of Students, and was subjected to sexual harassment by Archimandrite Isidore Brittain and illegal termination of employment by Bishop Nikolai Soraich.

Because the SMPAC used this particular case as one of the grounds for its accusations against Metropolitan Jonah "that have caused us unease and even alarm"[v], it is for the sake of clarity that I offer a brief synopsis of that case.

### **Case #1: Fr. Isidore Brittain. Sidebottom Letter**

Mr. Paul Sidebottom telephoned Metropolitan Herman on May 24, 2007, regarding an incident involving Fr. Isidore Brittain. One day later, he submitted the following letter to Metropolitan Herman:

The following is an account of the events I related to Your Eminence, introduced by a summary of our phone conversation.

Mitred-Archimandrite Isidore was scheduled to visit Kodiak on Tuesday, May 15, and serve liturgy in Karluk for the village's feast day on May 17, returning to Anchorage on Friday, May 18. In an e-mail to Fr. Chad Hatfield on Monday, Bishop Nikolai appointed Fr. Isidore Rector of the Seminary, effective June 1. Due to weather, Fr. Isidore was not able to travel to Karluk. Preparing to leave, seminarians and an instructor smelled alcohol on Fr. Isidore. At Vigil, served at Holy Resurrection Cathedral at 6:00 p.m., Fr. Isidore presided while intoxicated. He heard confessions, leaning heavily on the analogian for support. He stumbled and his speech was slurred at litya and the Gospel reading. Seminarians and parishioners informed me of the smell of alcohol on Fr. Isidore at the anointing. After the anointing, Fr. Isidore left the vigil service to meet two Russian reporters.

After speaking with the co-celebrants, I asked the seminarians and parishioners who witnessed Fr. Isidore's drunkenness to contact Bishop Nikolai that evening. Fr. Innocent Dresdow as the Dean of the Cathedral called the bishop. His Grace asked that Fr. Isidore be found and asked to contact the Chancery. Fr. Isidore had gone out with the reporters, so Fr. Innocent and I drove around Kodiak's downtown in search for him. We found Fr. Isidore stumbling down the hallway at the Kodiak Inn. Fr. Isidore spoke briefly with Bishop Nikolai by mobile phone. Fr. Innocent and I were asked to prepare Fr. Isidore for the night's last flight back to Anchorage. At the episcopal apartment Fr. Isidore was told to pack. He expressed his feeling of betrayal by us. Yet while making final scheduling with the airlines, Fr. Isidore continued to drink vodka which he had hidden in the apartment. He also took some unidentified pills. We were able to get Fr. Isidore to the airport but the staff would not take him because of his drunken state. He was

drooling and mumbling. An Anchorage flight was scheduled for the following afternoon.

In the car ride over and back, Fr. Isidore was in tears. He asked how he had come to his current condition. He said he had once been normal. He loved God. He loved his neighbor. All the while, he was reaching back to touch my leg in an inappropriate way and trying to hug me.

Back at the apartment, the drama increased. Fr. Isidore said if Fr. Innocent and I thought the answer was to send him back to Anchorage, we were wrong. Sending him back to 'Papa' was 'hell' and 'his death'. It was at this point in the night that Fr. Isidore admitted 'Vladyka beats me.' I did not pursue this issue because my priority was to calm Fr. Isidore, though Fr. Innocent confirmed this revelation later, adding another clergyman had been abused. Fr. Isidore said he was 'better off dead.' Rather than go back to Vladyka, he should just kill himself. Because of the pills Fr. Isidore had taken and the threats he made, I called Bishop Nikolai to ask if Fr. Isidore had ever threatened suicide before. His Grace denied, saying Fr. Isidore was too much a Christian. I wanted to know if I should stay up with Fr. Isidore or take him to the emergency room or call poison control. His Grace said this was not necessary. Fr. Isidore could be left to pass-out and sleep-it-off. I was to return in the morning to check on him.

Fr. Isidore refused to be calm though he could not stand or walk. I was in his bedroom alone with him. He threatened to 'bloody my face' if I did not leave. Then he tried to touch me inappropriately, wanting 'someone to cry with'. Several times Fr. Isidore tried to stand and grab me inappropriately. Finally, he collapsed on his bed. He passed-out, fondling himself.

Ascension morning, Fr. Isidore did attend liturgy at the order of Bishop Nikolai. He did not stay long. A deacon had to take communion wine away from him and send him to the episcopal apartment. I followed Fr. Isidore to the apartment, staying in my office. He later admitted he had tried to find the bottles which Fr. Innocent had confiscated the night before along with several cans of chewing tobacco. Not finding them he went for the vanilla extract in the kitchen to 'get rid of the shakes'.

After liturgy, Matushka Thekla and I spoke more with Fr. Isidore about the fact of his alcoholism. He said he began drinking in Alaska as Bishop Nikolai's deacon. His Grace had insisted on being driven, but berated Fr. Isidore's driving. Fr. Isidore decided to 'get rid of those feelings with a big bottle of wine'. His problem progressed from wine to sake to hard liquor. Fr. Isidore eventually chose vodka because it is the 'cleanest'. Fr. Isidore has had a drinking problem for five years since his arrival in Alaska with Bishop Nikolai.

Through the morning, Fr. Innocent, Matushka Thekla, and myself tried to encourage Fr. Isidore to enter treatment. Through the day, he agreed to enter Guest House where he was scheduled to enter about a year ago. On the afternoon of May 17, Fr. Isidore was accompanied by Fr. Innocent to Anchorage and then to Minnesota.

I welcome any further questions Your Beatitude might have.

Kissing Your Right Hand..."[vi]

Mark Stokoe, creator of the “Orthodox Christians for Accountability” website and member of the Metropolitan Council, wrote an article entitled “Allegations of Sexual Harassment, Assault, Domestic Violence, Neglect & Malpractice...” published on August 8, 2007, and posed the following questions regarding this incident:

How is it that a young man, recently graduated from St. Tikhon's [OCA Seminary], goes to Alaska as a member of the personal staff of Bishop Nikolai, is elevated from deacon to priest to archimandrite to dean of the Anchorage Deanery to Chancellor of the Diocese to Mitred Archimandrite to episcopal candidate in just five short years, and no one ever noticed he was becoming such an alcoholic that he is reduced to drinking vanilla extract to “get rid of the shakes”? He is the Chancellor of the Diocese and shares a residence with the Bishop, for heaven's sake. And no one noticed?

- How is it that this young priest was known to have been “scheduled to enter (rehab) about a year ago” but no one intervened when he failed to do so? Rather than sending him to treatment, the Bishop continued to reward him with appointments - in the past year these included becoming a Mitred-Archimandrite and Rector of St. Herman's - despite having refused treatment. How was this possible? Madness.
- How is it that a young priest drinks himself into a stupor, after swallowing unidentified pills and shouting that he “would be better off dead”, and another priest, as well as an officer of one of our seminaries, do not immediately seek medical attention for him? Madness.
- How is it that the priest and officer, after the young priest has confessed to being abused, call the alleged abuser to ask him what to do? Madness.
- How is it that the Bishop (regardless of the veracity of the allegations made against him) when made aware of a potentially fatal combination of unknown pills and alcohol then recommends “let him sleep it off” rather than seeking immediate medical attention? Madness.
- How is it that the two men then obey the Bishop, in defiance of common sense? In short, what kind of “climate of command” exists in the Diocese of Alaska where life-threatening situations are allowed to develop; and once developed, everyone is so afraid they must await the instructions of the Bishop before proceeding; and then obey commands that could be life-threatening? Madness. Madness, Madness.
- How is it that the Dean of the Kodiak Cathedral, knowing of additional allegations of physical abuse made against the Bishop of the Diocese, has never informed anyone of these allegations? More Madness.[vii]

Paul Sidebottom filed a sexual harassment claim against the OCA, and Bishop Nikolai fired him from his job at the seminary. In May 2008, Bishop Nikolai retired from the OCA, and he moved into a Serbian Orthodox Monastery in Australia. Fr. Isidore entered an alcohol abuse counseling program, and when he was done he served in a couple of Greek Orthodox parishes, then moved to Australia to be with Bishop Nikolai. Metropolitan Herman suspended him for moving to Australia without receiving a canonical blessing to do so. By the fall of 2008, Bishop Nikolai and Fr. Isidore were serving together at

a Serbian Orthodox Church and monastery, Fr. Isidore conducting services and officiating at funerals. According to the Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee (SMPAC), “While Fr. Isidore was living in Australia, he sought sexual interaction with other men through a gay internet matchmaking site.”[viii]

Metropolitan Jonah was elected Primate of the OCA in November 2008, and less than one month later in December 2008, the OCA reached an internal settlement agreement with Paul Sidebottom regarding his sexual harassment claim. The agreement stipulated that the OCA would move in a very direct, proactive manner to address sexual misconduct among the clergy and hierarchy of the OCA.

Metropolitan Jonah corresponded with Paul Sidebottom after the settlement, and wrote the following:

Archimandrite Isidore is currently under suspension. His case will be reviewed by the Holy Synod in the near future. Restoration to active ministry within the Orthodox Church seems highly unlikely but should the merciful Lord guide him to repentance, the process of recovery will be carefully monitored over such period of time as is determined by the OCA, in good faith, to be appropriate.[ix]

What actions did the Synod take (as requested by their Metropolitan) after Fr. Isidore returned to America? Something happened in the following two years between 2008 and 2010. Was it the repentance that Metropolitan Jonah had sought for in Fr. Isidore’s soul? Had Fr. Isidore received treatment for his alcoholism? What a quandary our new Metropolitan faced... what to do with this priest, who had given his life to the Church, and who, himself, had been abused physically by his own Bishop?

It was announced that Fr. Isidore was released into the supervision and guidance of Bishop Benjamin, Bishop of the Diocese of the West.[x] It appears our Metropolitan made a decision to give Fr. Isidore another chance—not by restoring him to active service as a priest--but allowing him to live within the Diocese of the West under Bishop Benjamin’s supervision. In November 2010, Metropolitan Jonah and Fr. Isidore were seen together during Divine Liturgy at a Diocese of the West church in Oregon.

### **Case #1: Fr. Isidore Brittain. SMPAC Shifts Blame to Met. Jonah**

The SMPAC, in their Memorandum of February 10, 2011, made this judgment of their Metropolitan’s release of Fr. Isidore to the Diocese of the West:

We are concerned that His Beatitude’s too quick willingness to forgive and restore Fr. Isidore will pose disastrous consequences for the Church, to potential victims, to Reader Sidebottom, and indeed, to Fr. Isidore. We are convinced that His Beatitude’s attitude and actions in the case of Fr. Isidore evidence a grave issue that the Holy Synod needs to address.”[xi]

I do not know what Bishop Benjamin has decided to do with Fr. Isidore within his diocese since 2010. It appears Fr. Isidore is still suspended from active ministry within the OCA.

The Orthodox Church of America is bound by the law and Christian duty to protect all of our brothers

and sisters from such sexual harassment as Fr. Isidore exhibited towards Paul Sidebottom. In this case, a settlement was reached with Paul Sidebottom in 2008, and so the OCA's legal obligations were met when that settlement was agreed upon with both parties. Beyond that, I am not certain how the SMPAC assumes themselves to be the validation or in the position to give a stamp of approval or rejection of the pastoral care and guidance given to Fr. Isidore by the Metropolitan and Bishop Benjamin. Can they presume to judge the contents of personal repentance between a father-confessor (or two father-confessors in this instance) and a sinner? I do not know the details of the abuse (physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental) Fr. Isidore suffered at the hands of OCA Bishop Nikolai. It chills me to hear of how he might have been beaten.

According to the SMPAC Memorandum of February 10, 2011, it appears that Fr. Isidore is still working on his alcohol issues:

The SMPAC has learned that Fr. Isidore was recently arrested for DWI, providing further evidence that he is not yet fit for active service in the church.[xii]

The SMPAC wrote that an arrest for "Driving While Intoxicated" (DWI) and presumably "Driving Under the Influence" of Alcohol (DUI) is "evidence" that makes a priest "not fit for active service in the church." Is this applied to all priests in the OCA?

Back to the SMPAC's usage of this as a "concrete example" of how Metropolitan Jonah was to blame for any single aspect of this case...

- Did Metropolitan Jonah display what they labeled a "critical lapse of judgment"? No.
- Did he cause "further deterioration"? No.
- Did he cause "potentially irreversible harm to all involved"? No.
- Did he "prevent a fitting resolution to the problem"? No.

This is not a "concrete example" of His Beatitude's inappropriate handling of this situation, as the SMPAC states and then the Synod agrees.

In fact, to the contrary, I find his involvement in the process of aligning the OCA hierarchy with a more forward approach to handling sexual misconduct to be the opposite of what the SMPAC regards as "indifference" to this issue. Metropolitan Jonah did indeed involve himself with many aspects of the creation of the SMPAC itself, and allowed the SMPAC to handle issues as they requested.

### **Case #1: Fr. Isidore Brittain. Committees and Charters**

Less than one year after his elevation as Metropolitan, (and while Fr. Isidore had already left the country and was living in Australia), Metropolitan Jonah was leading meetings with clergy and OCA hierarchy to address this issue. According to an OCA press release dated August 27, 2009,

“Metropolitan Jonah presides at review of sexual misconduct issues, policies”:

SYOSSET, NY [OCA Communications] -- On August 24, 2009, a meeting took place at the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America to discuss issues related to how the Church addresses cases of sexual misconduct.

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, presided at the day-long meeting, attended by the Very Rev. Alexander Garklavs, Chancellor; the Very Rev. Eric Tosi, Secretary; the Very Rev. Michael Matsko; the Very Rev. Theodore Bobosh; Protodeacon Peter Danilchick; Attorney James Spencer; [Paul Sidebottom’s attorney] and the OCA’s General Counsel Thaddeus Wojcik.

The meeting opened with a review of the history of the OCA’s development of policies and procedures in response to sexual misconduct cases. Noted were the contributions of previous personnel, including the Very Rev. Alexey Karlgut and the late Matushka Ellen Gvosdev, who was credited with special contributions. This was followed by a discussion of how to improve both the content and effectiveness of the Church’s current Policies, Standards, and Procedures on Sexual Misconduct, which represents the sequential accumulation of previous policies. Discussions led to the recognition that a number of specific areas need to be addressed, including the following:

- The extent to which the Church’s policies, standards, and procedures have been implemented in practice and how compliance with them is ensured.
- The need for the Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations, under the authority of the Primate of the Church and responsible to the Holy Synod, to find and designate qualified professionals, who would be called on to do investigations when occasions arise.
- While complaints formerly had to be made in writing in order for an investigation to begin, non-written allegations should also be investigated.
- Training for clergy and Church employees should be increased and improved, so that there is a better understanding of their duties under the Policies, Standards and Procedures, including their mandatory reporting obligations under various state laws.
- Alleged victims of sexual misconduct should not be required to release claims against the Church in order to have their allegations investigated.
- Any retaliation against a person or persons reporting allegations of sexual misconduct will be explicitly prohibited in the Policies, Standards and Procedures.”[xiii]

Metropolitan Jonah had inherited a system for dealing with sexual misconduct cases that was not only new, but was, by all accounts, a work in progress. He worked in consort with others in the OCA hierarchy to streamline the process of handling sexual misconduct allegations. According to a report by the Special Investigation Committee:

[In 2009]... it became apparent that the OCA’s Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (the “Office for Review”) which was established by the Sexual Misconduct Policies, was in considerable need of revamping to fulfill its role in responding to cases of

allegations of sexual misconduct in a timely manner that is appropriate spiritually, ethically, pastorally, professionally, and legally. In responding to these needs, His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah blessed the creation of the SMPAC within the administration of the OCA Chancery.

In addition to reviewing and revising the Sexual Misconduct Policies, the SMPAC’s mandate is to assist the Metropolitan as the one under whose authority the Office for Review operates, and the Chancellor, who manages the Office for Review in its daily operations.[xiv]

By January 2010, Metropolitan Jonah blessed the formation of the Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee. Part of the SMPAC Committee Charter follows. It outlines specifically who is responsible for handling sexual misconduct allegations—the Bishops of the Dioceses in which allegations are made--and states that the Committee is simply advisory to the Metropolitan:

**Orthodox Church in America Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee Charter**

The Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee (“Committee”) was created by Metropolitan Jonah on January 28, 2010 to work with and assist the Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (“Office”). The Committee was initially known as the “Sexual Misconduct Allegations Review Committee.”

The Committee is under the authority of the Metropolitan, and is chaired by the Chancellor of the Church, who is the day-to-day supervisor of the Office. The Committee operates in an advisory capacity only and does not assume any responsibility for the handling of sexual misconduct allegations, because that responsibility properly belongs to the Diocesan Hierarchs and the Office, according to the Policies, Standards, and Procedures on Sexual Misconduct. Committee members are appointed by the Metropolitan.

The complexity of sexual misconduct allegations requires a multi-dimensional awareness of issues and skills in various disciplines, so that allegations of misconduct may be considered from several perspectives -- spiritually, ethically, legally, clinically as well as pastorally. Overlapping and interrelation between these disciplines can best be addressed by a team approach, such as via a standing advisory committee to assist the Metropolitan and the Office.

Metropolitan Jonah acted with integrity in the Fr. Isidore case, and worked with church hierarchy to establish the very rules and policies that SMPAC later said he did not follow.

The SMPAC’s allegations against Metropolitan Jonah regarding the Fr. Isidore case were not proven. Metropolitan Jonah should not have been forced to resign based on his handling of the Fr. Isidore case.

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**CASE #2: FR. SIMEON KHARON - PART - I**

**Case #2: Fr. Simeon Kharon - Part I. Background**

And now we come to the second of three cases that the Synod has used against Metropolitan Jonah.

When John Simeon Kharon was 13, his family emigrated from the Ukraine to the United States of America. They settled in San Francisco in 1989. Simeon traveled to Greece, met Elder Dionysios, and joined the Moni Petras Monastery in Karditsa, Greece. After three years at the Monastery, Fr. Simeon traveled to his home country of Ukraine, and then went to Russia.

According to the Special Investigative Committee (SIC) of the OCA:

In early December 2009, he meets with His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah in Moscow... Metropolitan Jonah invites Fr. Simeon to come to the United States. His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah told us that he had thought that Fr. Simeon could be assigned to a parish, perhaps in New York or on the West Coast; a parish where there was a pastoral need for a Russian speaking priest.[xv]

When Metropolitan Jonah was enthroned, dignitaries from around the world attended the ceremonies. Elder Dionysios from the Moni Petras Monastery attended the event. (Elder Dionysios is the spiritual father of five monasteries in Greece). Apparently there was discussion between Elder Dionysios and Metropolitan Jonah about the need for more monasteries on American soil. According to eyewitness accounts of the enthronement, there was a group of monks and nuns with Elder Dionysios who had come from Greece for the event. The monks and nuns openly discussed the possibility of starting a monastery in the Washington, D.C. area. One of the monks in attendance from Greece was Melchisedek Pleska (a former monk who had attended St. Tikhon's Seminary in America, then left for Greece and was reported to be in association with one of the monasteries of Elder Dionysios, who reappeared in America at Metropolitan Jonah's elevation, and then was suddenly elevated to the position of Bishop of the OCA.) Another monk in attendance was Fr. Simeon Kharon.

In a letter dated April 11, 2009, Elder Dionysios released two monks to Metropolitan Jonah—Fr. Seraphim Starkof and Fr. Simeon Kharon to the Metropolitan of the OCA:

We release the beloved to us great schema brother, the all-venerable Archimandrite Lord Seraphim, theologian, in the world George Starkof, son of Leonid and Aria, who has the Greek visa/passport number [] for the establishment of Sacred Monasteries in Dallas, TX, USA; and also his colleague, our most-venerable Hieromonk John Kharon, theologian and iconographer, son of Alexander and Ludmilla, who has an American passport number [], to the jurisdiction of His Beatitude, also the locum tenens of Dallas, with the blessing of His Eminence, our Metropolitan of Thessaliodida and Phanariophersalon, Kirillos II.[xvi]

Fr. Seraphim, in his blog entry entitled “Unforeseen Circumstances” wrote:

Our Abbot and Elder Archimandrite Dionysios was present at the enthronement of Metropolitan Jonah of OCA. Metropolitan asked him to send some monks and nuns from our monasteries in order to develop monastic life in USA. Because of that I even took a release note from Church of Greece to OCA. Recently I visited United States and met Metropolitan. Finally it was decided to start something in Oklahoma. There is no Monastery there, only a small church of Sts. Cyrill and Methodios. But staying and serving there it would be possible to find a place for the Monastery and to build it later on.[xvii]

Fr. Seraphim came to the United States, but returned back to Greece as he was drafted into military service. Fr. Simeon arrived in America in December 2009. He initially stayed at the Chancery. Several nuns (headed by Abbess Aemiliane) came from Elder Dionysios' monasteries, and settled in Washington, D.C. at the St. Nicholas Cathedral Rectory.

There is all manner of interpretation—academic, scholastic, and personal—of whether or not Fr. Seraphim's and Fr. Simeon's "release" by Elder Dionysios was "canonical". Fr. Seraphim believed he was released into the OCA, as indicated in his statement. The internet is full of such speculation, and I have found it nearly impossible to wade through the specifics of if this "transfer" was "canonical" or not as I am not a canon lawyer. If there is anything that Metropolitan Jonah or Elder Dionysios did that was supposedly "noncanonical", then it was unintentional and without deceit or guile, done for the betterment of relations between the OCA and the Elder Dionysios and his venerable monasteries, done in Christian love—not in deception—for the holy purpose of establishing monasteries in America. I am willing to give our Metropolitan the benefit of the doubt that he and Elder Dionysios may not have followed, to the letter, protocol in matters of inter-jurisdictional transfers. That is to be forgiven, is it not?

### **Case #2: Fr. Simeon Kharon - Part I. Questioning the Release**

But according to the SIC Report, Fr. Simeon was not truly "released" into the OCA:

Fr. Simeon was, and technically still is, a priestmonk of the Greek Orthodox Church, a member of the Moni Petras Monastery in Karditsa, Greece... For a while his canonical status was not clear, but he is now, nor has ever been a cleric of the Orthodox Church in America.”[xviii]

... The transfer of priests who are attached to a monastery does depend on the agreement of the Abbott, but is made official only with the blessing of the respective diocesan hierarch. Unless done verbally by Metropolitan Jonah, no formal request was ever made to Fr. Simeon's bishop (Metropolitan Kirillos II of Thessalotida and Phanariophersalon), nor is there a formal release from Metropolitan Kirillos II.[xix]

Apparently the words of Elder Dionysios assuring Metropolitan Jonah of Fr. Simeon's release "with the blessing of His Eminence, our Metropolitan Kirillos II" did not equate to "official" for the four SIC members.

Questions have been raised about the authenticity and validity of the release of another Greek monastic, Fr. Melchisedek, also from the group from Greece. Has the Synod applied the same rigorous review and scrutiny to the "release" of Fr. Melchisedek, who is now an OCA bishop? Questions raised by writers in social media primarily center around two allegations involving Fr. Melchisedek: 1) Fr. Melchisedek played a role in a controversial situation while in Greece, and he suspiciously departed without the consent of his monastic Elder (who merely requested repentance from Fr. Melchisedek for the situation); and 2) Fr. Melchisedek was released from Elder Dionysios' monastery, but then obtained a release document from another source and used this latter document as the basis for his election in the OCA, so as not to be associated with Elder Dionysios to hurt his chance of election. (On April 2, 2009, Fr. Melchisedek was elected as Bishop of the OCA Diocese of Western Pennsylvania.) Is either of these allegations true?

## Case #2: Fr. Simeon Kharon - Part I. Allegations of Assault

In March 2010, Metropolitan Jonah welcomed Fr. Simeon to live in the basement of the house next to St. Nicholas Cathedral in Washington, D.C., and he stayed there briefly. He then moved into an apartment and stayed there for three weeks.

According to the SIC Report:

Late on the evening of April 22, 2010, Fr. Simeon went to the apartment of J, who lived above [name withheld]. She allowed him to use her internet access code for the Wi-Fi connection. He claimed that he went to her apartment because his computer internet wasn't working. J told us that he came to her door with a bottle of "Everclear" (190 neutral grain alcohol) which he was drinking with orange juice. He asked her if she wanted to have a drink and asked for a cigarette. She did not allow him into her apartment but suggested they go out into the courtyard to smoke and to talk. There was some conversation between them. At one point Fr. Simeon pulled out a knife to show J. He also spoke about smoking marijuana. He consistently "invaded" her space, and finally attempted to put his arm around J and kiss her. He claimed that he only put his arm on her to "say 'bravo' and pat her on the back." She pushed him away, ran to her apartment and locked the door. Fr. Simeon came back to her apartment and knocked on the door. J told him to stop or she'll call the police. Fr. Simeon replies "Maybe you f---ing should." She does call the police, Fr. Simeon returns to apartment.

The version of what took place next is based on J's testimony, on Fr. Simeon's account and on that of Police Officer Oladato. Fr. Simeon's account is confusing. When asked if he was drinking, he replied, "I may have had a shot of something." J's account was that he came to her door with a bottle of "Everclear." Police Officer Oladato also stated that Fr. Simeon was "highly intoxicated." Fr. Simeon stated the nuns (that would include Abbess Ameliane[xx] and Sister Veronica [fellow monastics who had come from Greece and had started "Entrance of the Theotokos Monastery] ) had driven to the apartment with a delivery of food for him. At the same time, the police came to his door. They entered the apartment and began looking around, but Fr. Simeon rebuked them for "entering a holy place." Loud, foul language was heard. "I'm a f---ing priest," Fr. Simeon told them. He took a swing and tried to hit a police officer. He was taken by the police and incarcerated. The next day, he was released to Abbess Ameliane.

Fr. Simeon confirmed that he had to make a court appearance on June 15, 2010. He appeared in court in full clerical garb and was accompanied by Abbess Ameliane and Sister Veronica. The nuns spoke to the Judge on Fr. Simeon's behalf, vouching for his good conduct. After the incident Fr. Simeon lived with the nuns at the St. Nicholas rectory for several weeks.

His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah told the Committee that he learned about the incident around the middle of May. On May 19, 2010, he sent Fr. Simeon a letter. He "suspends" Fr. Simeon and encourages him to deal with his alcoholism.[xxi]

On May 19, 2010, Metropolitan Jonah sent Fr. Simeon the following letter.

Dear Fr. Symeon,

The Lord bless you!

There are a number of issues that we need to discuss. I am very sorry for your recent hospitalization and the precarious state of your health[xxii]. I care about you, and want the best for you. However, there are some very serious consequences to your actions, of which I have only recently been informed.

I understand that you were arrested and spent a night in jail, for assault, against a young woman from the apartment complex in which you were staying. Until that matter is legally resolved, you are suspended from all priestly functions, though you may receive communion in the altar as a priest. It is for me to decide, once I have seen the documents, when and whether you can be restored to priestly function. This is a very serious matter, and you may have cut yourself off from the priesthood.

Of course, you have personally said nothing to me about this, and this is also unacceptable. Further, I was told there was another encounter with the police earlier this year, in which you ended up in custody for three days. You told me nothing about this either.

Most important, the reason for your illness, and I presume these other incidents, is alcohol abuse. My friend, you are killing yourself. This has to stop. Shortly after you arrived, I was suspicious that you were abusing alcohol. With the drinking, your behavior gets out of control. I understand you were belligerent with the police, and not cooperative. I also have been told of your being drunk in public, in parish functions. This is totally unacceptable behavior for a priest and a monk.

I am putting you under strict monastic obedience to stay with the nuns, in their top floor, until June 4. You may not go out with friends, or leave the house except to go to church or to work. You are to be at daily prayers, morning and evening, and to eat with them at regular meals. You may not touch any alcohol. One other exception is to attend meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, daily, with someone the nuns trust. It is unacceptable for you to stay alone, which is one reason I do not want you to use my residence.

I know you want to deny your problem. But this is self-delusion. You know you are in deep trouble. This is a wakeup call. Accept that you have a problem with alcohol, and start dealing with it.

In the meantime, you need to cooperate with the people around you, especially the nuns and [name withheld], who care about you very much and only desire your good. You should find a residential alcohol treatment program that will accept you as a charity client, as you have no insurance or other resources, and enter that program by June 4. After that, you may go to St. Tikhon's Monastery for a time.

Given your legal entanglements, you cannot leave the country. This would make your life even more complicated.

Perhaps the reason you had to come to America is to deal with your alcoholism, and thus save

both your life and your priesthood. As it is, these are in grave danger because of your drinking. You have the chance to save both.

With fatherly love in Christ,

+Jonah<br />  
Archbishop of Washington<br />  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada[xxiii]

For Metropolitan Jonah to step into the role of spiritual advisor and father is admirable. He could have easily dismissed this priest who was battling alcoholism, sending him immediately back to Greece. Instead, he (as is his nature, as he always does) believed in the Gospel of Christ. He offered the hand of Christ to lift up this poor soul, who seemed lost in his new environment. He gave Fr. Simeon very concrete spiritual counsel and fatherly discipline, and offered Fr. Simeon a penance—and, with that extreme forgiveness and genuine compassion that Metropolitan Jonah is known throughout the world for—he gave Fr. Simeon a chance for redemption.

June 4 came and went, and I do not know the particulars of how Fr. Simeon entered the spirit of repentance called for in Metropolitan Jonah’s letter. That is a matter between Fr. Simeon and his Lord and Savior.

Metropolitan Jonah continued to extend fatherly love and guidance, and went out of his way to provide assistance to Fr. Simeon. “His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah asked Fr. George Kokhno, a priest attached to St. Nicholas Cathedral, a recovering alcoholic and participant at AA meetings to help Fr. Simeon. Fr. George spoke with Fr. Simeon on a few occasions.”[xxiv] According to Fr. George, Fr. Simeon was in denial of his drinking problem.

### **Case #2: Fr. Simeon Kharon - Part I. No Charges of Assault**

On June 15, 2010, Fr. Simeon appeared in court. There were no charges against Fr. Simeon.

Following the June 15, 2010 court appearance, His Beatitude accepted the claims of Fr. Simeon and Abbess Ameliane that Fr. Simeon was ‘exonerated’ and there were ‘no charges against him.’ Evidently, Metropolitan then ‘lifted the suspension’ though the exact nature of what Fr. Simeon was blessed to do is unclear.[xxv]

In fact, Abbess Aemiliane herself later contacted the police inquiring as to the incident with Fr. Simeon. According to an email exchange she recently posted on the monastery’s website, she communicated with the police to ask if Fr. Simeon had a criminal record or if there were any warrants out for his arrest. The police officer assured her that Fr. Simeon did not have a criminal history, that his record was “clean”, and there were no charges against him on record.[xxvi]

According to parishioners of St. Nicholas Cathedral, Fr. Simeon never served Divine Liturgy, nor was he ever on the parish list of clergy. He never dined with the clergy, who dined apart from the parishioners in the social hall. Many of the parishioners called him “Brother Simeon” not “Fr. Simeon”. Evidently prior to his being taken into custody for drunken conduct, Fr. Simeon heard the confessions of a few parishioners, but that was stopped.

On Sunday, June 20, Fr. Simeon met Fr. Dubinin in St. Nicholas Cathedral, in a meeting pre-arranged by Metropolitan Jonah himself. (Fr. Peter Dubinin is the military chaplain recruiter for the OCA.) “Metropolitan Jonah thought that Fr. Simeon could ‘go through recovery from his alcoholism in the military’.”[xxvii] However, because Fr. Simeon was still in denial about his alcoholism, it was not deemed to be a legitimate possibility.

### **Case #2: Fr. Simeon Kharon - Part I. Rumors of Rape**

At the end of June 2010, rumors started circulating that Fr. Simeon had raped one of the nuns. Then a rumor flew through the parish that Fr. Simeon had raped a woman back in January 2010 while Fr. Simeon was living at the Chancery.

Some accounts of the incident were inflated to surmise that ‘some monk’ had committed ‘rape’, perhaps even of the nuns. The exaggerated report was conveyed to Fr. Simeon and to Abbess Ameliane. Understandably they were extremely upset by the unfounded rumors. Their reaction, however, was excessive. Fr. Simeon responded with threats of bringing a lawsuit against those who spread these rumors. Abbess Ameliane’s reaction was similar... Abbess Ameliane continues to stand by claims that Fr. Simeon ‘never did anything to compromise his priesthood.’[xxviii]

The nuns believed in the innocence of Fr. Simeon. Abbess Aemiliane wrote, on letterhead of the Holy Monastery of the Twelve Apostles [Red Church] of Karditsa, Greece (not OCA letterhead):

...Our brother never did anything to compromise his priesthood or another person, nor did he ever harass anyone, and we have known him since he was a young boy, together with his blessed family... Would that all the ecclesiastical institutions and agents work through direct investigations, like the Synod of the OCA and yourself under its mandate, because the discovery of the truth liberates, heals, illumines, glorifies victims with the crown of martyrdom, as in this case, our spiritual brother, the above-mentioned hieromonk. [xxix]

In early July 2010, the OCA’s Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations discussed the situation with the Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee (SMPAC).

Although the canonical status of Fr. Simeon was questionable, and he was not formally received into the OCA, it was deemed necessary to conduct an investigation inasmuch as he was clearly associated with both Metropolitan Jonah and St. Nicholas Cathedral. By the middle of July 2010, the SMPAC began notifying His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah and the Holy Synod about the need to initiate a proper investigation as mandated by the OCA’s policies and procedures regarding allegations of such misconduct. With the blessing of the Metropolitan and the consent of the Holy Synod, the Special Investigation Committee [SIC] was officially formed on July 25, 2010. Because of the extraordinary nature of this case the “supervising” hierarch of the alleged respondent, Metropolitan Jonah recused himself from the investigation process.[xxx]

During the course of their investigation, only Metropolitan Jonah was interviewed by the entire committee as a whole. Chancellor Garklavs interviewed Fr. Simeon, Bishop Melchisedek, and three others. Fr. Gregory Safchuk interviewed the alleged victim (J), Police Officer Oladato, and another. Dr. Nikita Eike interviewed Fr. Peter Dubinin and one other. Abbess Aemiliane and the nuns were never

interviewed.

The rumor of “rape” would most assuredly have been brought up at this point if any of the witnesses had any information about such a criminal act. The SIC did not deem the charges worthy of investigating at the time. No credible allegations of rape were made. No victims came forward.

The SIC did not believe in the credibility of the rumors that Fr. Simeon had committed rape. In fact, the SIC determined the charges of rape were “exaggerated” and “unfounded”. [xxxix]

Please also note that Metropolitan Jonah had written to Fr. Simeon in his May 19, 2010 letter:

Of course, you have personally said nothing to me about this [the drunken incident when he tried to wrap his arm around J], and this is also unacceptable. Further, I was told there was another encounter with the police earlier this year, in which you ended up in custody for three days. You told me nothing about this either. [xxxix]

Did the SIC investigate this other “encounter with the police” during their investigation? There is no indication they did so—or if they did, there was no sexual misconduct involved, or certainly they would have included it in their report.

Metropolitan Jonah said in his letter: “The reason for your illness, and I presume these other incidents, is alcohol abuse.”

If Metropolitan Jonah had believed that Fr. Simeon at that time had raped a woman, he would have never endangered the nuns. Ethically and morally, he is a man of integrity and is incapable of such an action. Even skeptics who do not know him personally would have to admit that such an action would assuredly end the personal relationship with Elder Dionysios he was trying to establish and strengthen, and he would never risk such a thing.

The SIC continued its work to investigate J’s claim.

The Investigation Committee had an initial teleconference on August 4. Other teleconferences took place on August 12 and 23. A meeting of the Committee, together with the interview with Metropolitan Jonah took place on August 30. Another face to face meeting took place in Baltimore on September 16. [xxxix]

In September, after the SIC had begun its investigation and five months after Metropolitan Jonah had “suspended” him, Fr. Simeon was involved in another incident:

...Fr. Simeon had been visiting a young Russian woman [name withheld]. Fr. Simeon was given to all sorts of rude and bizarre behavior. He appeared in a restaurant in a strange white garb, singing loud and offensive songs. He was carrying a small gun, which he offered to the young woman to shoot, and then shot a couple of bullets into the ground. [xxxix]

The four members of the SIC continued their investigation. “Final teleconferences took place on November 8, 10, 12, and 15.” [xxxix] On November 16, 2010, the SIC report was presented to the Synod.

## **Case #2: Fr. Simeon Kharon - Part I. SMPAC Clears Met. Jonah Then Blames Him**

The results of the investigation were the following:

Was the misconduct ‘sexual abuse’? The Committee must answer yes to this question. The level of abuse did not rise to the level of physical contact, but there can be no doubt that the attempt to forcefully embrace and kiss J was sexual in nature. Other forms of abuse (e.g., verbal, emotional) were also evident.[xxxvi]

Metropolitan’s letter of May 19, 2010, was an appropriate response to His Beatitude’s becoming aware of the April 22 incident.[xxxvii]

It is very clear that Metropolitan Jonah took the allegations seriously. He made it very evident in his letter to Fr. Simeon that he was to immediately address his alcoholism. With the matter resolved with the police, it is unclear what more the SIC expected Metropolitan Jonah to do, especially with a priest (they reiterate over and over again in their report) was not even in the OCA. The Special Investigation Committee said that Metropolitan Jonah's response was "appropriate."

Just three months later, the SMPAC used the SIC Report’s findings regarding Metropolitan Jonah’s handling of Fr. Simeon’s situation in its infamously damning Memorandum as the second of the three incidents that led Metropolitan Jonah’s removal.

The SMPAC wrote in their February 10, 2011 Memorandum regarding the SIC Report and Fr. Simeon’s case:

...The investigative committee [SIC], which was headed by His Grace Bishop Michael, made specific recommendations in Fr. Simeon’s case. The Holy Synod accepted the report and its recommendations. Several of these recommendations have been ignored or singlehandedly overturned by His Beatitude.[xxxviii]

This is a false accusation.

## **Case #2: Fr. Simeon Kharon - Part I. SMPAC's Five Recommendations**

There were a total of five official recommendations written on page 12 of the SIC Report. They are quoted exactly as follows:

1. Prayers should be said for Fr. Simeon, for J, for Abbess Ameliane.
2. Fr. Simeon is in need of immediate comprehensive professional treatment, in addition to regular participation in a twelve-step program. In whatever way the OCA can facilitate this should be given consideration.

3. The possibility of the OCA canonically receiving Fr. Simeon is out of the question, until such time as long-term sobriety is manifested and after a thorough psychological examination.
4. In this case His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah's pastoral judgment was questionable; the Holy Synod should encourage His Beatitude to regularly consult and brief his Chancellor and Chancery staff about pastoral issues (receptions, assignments, inter-jurisdictional transfers, etc.).
5. Abbess Ameliane's conduct has compromised her desire to found a monastic community within the Orthodox Church in America. There is also the issue of her unusual and nonsensical allegiance: simultaneously to the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America and to Elder Dionysios, who lives in Greece. The Holy Synod should not endorse any monastic community that is associated with the Elder Dionysios.

### **Case #2: Fr. Simeon Kharon - Part I. Analysis of SMPAC's Five Recommendations**

The first recommendation, to direct the Metropolitan of our Church to pray, was most assuredly followed.

The second recommendation had already been done by our Metropolitan—in fact, months prior! As soon as Metropolitan Jonah found out about the incident with J, he did indeed give very specific recommendations to Fr. Simeon about treatment for alcoholism, and also put him in touch with a member of the St. Nicholas community for counseling, which Fr. Simeon did not pursue. There is nothing else our Metropolitan could have done on this point. (Is the SIC and the SMPAC asking the Metropolitan to become personally involved in the life of every alcoholic priest of the OCA, and all alcoholic priests who are not in the OCA as well?)

The third recommendation was followed. Fr. Simeon was not canonically received into the OCA, and Metropolitan Jonah made quite the point in his April letter to Fr. Simeon about the restriction of his duties.

Now we come to point number four: asking Metropolitan Jonah to trust his Chancery Staff, namely Chancellor Garklavs. Is this the same Chancery and Syosset staff who were illegally hacking into his computer and into his email? Is this the same staff who were leaking news of his personal, pastoral correspondence into online media? (Later, the SMPAC would write in their Memorandum that Metropolitan Jonah created problems by “avoidance of the people assigned to serve the office of the Metropolitan.”[xxxix]) For Chancellor Garklavs, a SIC member and a SMPAC member, to write that the Metropolitan should consult more frequently with him is insulting.

The fifth recommendation is shocking:

Abbess Ameliane's conduct has compromised her desire to found a monastic community within the Orthodox Church of America. There is also the issue of her unusual canonical allegiance: simultaneously to the Primate of the OCA and to Elder Dionysios, who lives in Greece. The

Holy Synod should not endorse any monastic community that is associated with the Elder Dionysios.[xl]

Who are these four committee members--who, by the way, do not even give her the respect of spelling her name correctly in their report--to judge Abbess Aemiliane's sisterly protection of a monk from Greece, whom she believed to be innocent of anything but drunkenly conduct? Abbess Aemiliane was defending her brother in Christ given the information she had. Her fierce protection of her nuns, her brother in Christ, and the good reputation and name of her Elder is commendable. Within the D.C. community, rumors of criminal activity were flying, and she sought to stop those rumors by indicating that she would take legal action against those who continued to slander her community without factual evidence.

Furthermore, how dare the Special Investigation Committee (SIC) call into question the activity of Elder Dionysios and his spiritual children? Metropolitan Jonah was doing something extremely important by hosting these monastics; for these four people to write such a statement lacks the slightest bit of diplomacy. Metropolitan Jonah was trying to establish diplomatic relations with the Greek church and agreed to host these monastics for the sake of working together for the greater glory of Orthodoxy within America. The fact that one of them turned out to have a drinking problem was unfortunate. However, it is absolutely not within the jurisdiction for a four-member Special Investigation Committee to make a declaration about inter-jurisdictional relationships being established by the Metropolitan of the OCA.

Regardless, Metropolitan Jonah, at the request of the Synod who agreed with the SIC members that the OCA should not be associated with "any monastic community that is associated with the Elder Dionysios", transferred the Elevation of the Theotokos Monastery into the hands of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR) in early 2011. Metropolitan Jonah made the following announcement to the St. Nicholas community:

I would like to say a few words about the nuns who are going to be relocated from the rectory so that it can be prepared for a new dean for the cathedral. Because of the unfortunate circumstances that have overtaken us, they have been taken under the omophorion of His Eminence, Metropolitan Hilarion of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia.

As I hope many of you may have seen on the internet, Metropolitan Hilarion and I have just had a magnificent celebration of the Divine Liturgy, just before the Episcopal Assembly. What this means is that the Orthodox Church in America and ROCOR have absolutely no obstacles left between them. We are fully united and in communion. We are fully One Church, granted not in administration. But this is a huge step toward Orthodox unity in this country. This is really something to give thanks to God for. Those of you who have been around for a long time know that there have been all sorts of difficulties between the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia and the Orthodox Church in America.

That is gone. That period is ended. Thank God. We are now in an entirely new era of our relationship with our brothers and sisters from the top level of the hierarchy all the way through.

So, our sisters being with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, means simply that they will be living in a different place. But they were going to have to do that anyway. They will be in a

context that I believe will allow them much greater freedom in which their community can grow without any kind of interference. It will be a wonderful thing—our bond of love is there, our bonds with this community are absolutely solid, complete. There needs to be no feeling of any kind of break. For them, it is absolutely a great blessing—maybe not so much for us at St. Nicholas. But they were going to move anyway and they will not be too far away. The sisters are in the process of packing up and anyone who can help would be most appreciated.

Let us give thanks to God that He brought the sisters to us. One thing about monasteries—and this is very important—monasteries are places where people of all jurisdictions come together. It doesn't matter whether you are OCA or ROCOR or Syrian or whatever. They are places where people come to pray together, to work together, and to cooperate in building a common vision. In a sense, it doesn't matter whose antimens is on the altar. What matters is that a monastery is where all Orthodox come together in a united witness... God bless you.[xli]

And Abbess Aemiliane's gracious response showed her understanding of the situation. She responded to Metropolitan Jonah and addressed the parish as follows:

His Beatitude said it all.

We gave you our hearts, and you will always be in our prayers. His Beatitude is, was, and will continue to be our father. Forgive us for any shadow cast by our passions, and forgive us for all that we were not able to do. We would have liked to serve you constantly in every way.

In whatever pain and injustice, let us not sin, but let us stand together in Christ.

We trust you, we respect you, we believe in you, and we are always yours. This is especially moving for me, from thirty years ago when I was a parishioner here.

You have a home with us and a welcome in Greece, where our Eldress Diodora and your own Sr. Ionia await you, and anywhere else we end up. We thank you for your sacrificial, incredible hospitality, allowing us to live in the rectory and sheltering us and giving us a chance to take root. Again, our love wherever we are, we are yours with all our hearts.[xlii]

What a blow to the vision that Metropolitan Jonah had upon his elevation—for the continued striving, with all our hearts and prayers—for the unification of Orthodox believers worldwide! What an utter travesty! And yet both monastics approached their troubles with cheery optimism.

Metropolitan Jonah's transfer of the nuns from the OCA into ROCOR is an example that Metropolitan Jonah indeed was NOT ignoring the Synod, but was actually following their directions. The SMPAC's statement against Metropolitan Jonah that, "Several of these recommendations have been ignored or singlehandedly overturned by His Beatitude" is an outright lie. All five of their recommendations were followed—and were followed above and beyond what was outlined.

The SMPAC also accused Metropolitan Jonah of "indifference" to the "victims" of Fr. Simeon:

The indifference of His Beatitude to the actual and potential victims of Fr. Simeon—for example, allowing Fr. Simeon to hear confessions and counsel the nuns and His Beatitude's

instruction to Fr. Simeon to remain in the nuns' company—is incomprehensible and disturbing.  
[xliii]

Why? Why is it “incomprehensible”? Why is it “disturbing”? When Metropolitan Jonah sent Fr. Simeon to live with the nuns in the Rectory, he had just been informed that Fr. Simeon did indeed have a drinking problem that led him to have two drunken outbursts. Fr. Simeon was ordered to sober up, and the nuns (his sisters from Greece) were to assist him with getting to AA meetings and to keep an eye on him while he went through this process. Metropolitan Jonah indicated in his letter that after Fr. Simeon got into an alcohol treatment plan, he could stay at St. Tikhon's Seminary.

The SMPAC went on to assert:

<blockquote>Related to all of this, and very troubling by itself, is that His Beatitude recently told Fr. Gregory Safchuk, the Chancellor of the Washington Diocese, that His Beatitude was working with Fr. Michael Matsko and the SMPAC on the Fr. Simeon case. This was blatantly false. Neither Matsko nor the SMPAC were ever consulted by His Beatitude about the case. Such a statement is not only disturbing but also exposes the members of the SMPAC to claims of professional misconduct and liability, since it makes it appear that the SMPAC has somehow approved His Beatitude's actions in the Fr. Simeon case.[xliv]

May we give the Metropolitan the benefit of the doubt that “working on the Fr. Simeon case” meant that he was fully participating in the SMPAC's investigation, which had only concluded a couple of months earlier?

The SMPAC Memorandum outlines this case yet again just three months after the SIC report was given to the Synod. Their section on Fr. Simeon offers absolutely no evidence for their assertions that “The case of Fr. Simeon reveals a troubling lack of understanding and discernment by His Beatitude of the pastoral issues at stake.”[xlv]

Back to the SMPAC's usage of this as a “concrete example” (example two of three) of how Metropolitan Jonah was to blame in any single aspect of this case...

- Did Metropolitan Jonah display what they labeled a “critical lapse of judgment”? No.
- Did he cause “further deterioration”? No.
- Did he cause “potentially irreversible harm to all involved”? No.
- Did he “prevent a fitting resolution to the problem”? No.

Again, this is not a “concrete example” of His Beatitude's inappropriate handling of this situation, as the SMPAC states and then the Synod agrees.

(More on the Fr. Simeon case later in this summary [“Fr. Simeon, Part Two”], as the Synod uses it in their July 16, 2012 statement regarding Metropolitan Jonah's forced resignation.)

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### CASE #3: ABP. SERAPHIM STORHEIM

#### Case #3: Abp. Seraphim Storheim. Background

The third and final example used against Metropolitan Jonah is regarding Archbishop Seraphim.

Fr. Seraphim Storheim (Kenneth Storheim) was tonsured a priest in 1979 by Metropolitan Theodosius, and received monastic tonsure in April 1987 at St. Tikhon's. Metropolitan Theodosius elevated him to the level of Bishop in June 1987, and the Synod elevated him to the position of Archbishop in March 2007.[xlvi]

SMPAC wrote:

In 2008, just prior to the All American Council, the Holy Synod was made aware by a senior OCA priest of grave allegations of sexual misconduct against Archbishop Seraphim. These allegations were taken seriously enough that Archbishop Seraphim withdrew his name from consideration to become Metropolitan.[xlvii]

In 2009, His Beatitude decided upon a course of action that was merely a semblance of an investigation into the allegations, despite being advised by Fr. Michael Matsko that such action would not fulfill any of the professional standards demanded by such serious allegations. Fr. Matsko had insisted that a forensic evaluation be done according to accepted professional standards in order to proceed with due diligence, to show proper respect to all involved, and to avoid painful legal entanglement and liability. However, the advice of Fr. Matsko was completely disregarded by His Beatitude.

Instead, Archbishop Seraphim was sent to talk with Fr. Meletios Webber, who had not held a professional license for 18 years, and to Fr. David Fontes, who is a licensed clinical psychologist, but who did not conduct any psychological evaluation of the archbishop. Neither Fr. Meletios nor Fr. Fontes produced a professional report of evaluation, although they each sent a letter to His Beatitude, which consisted of the conversations held between Archbishop Seraphim and Fr. Meletios and Fr. Fontes, respectively...[xlviii]

SMPAC states that the Office for Review and Syosset knew about "grave allegations of sexual misconduct" about Archbishop Seraphim BEFORE Metropolitan Jonah was elected. Did the Office for Review investigate those allegations at that time? Furthermore, this statement written in SMPAC's Memorandum actually contradicts what Chancellor Garklavs later testified, which was that there were no allegations to investigate. (More to come on this point.)

Archbishop Seraphim was a very beloved and valued member of the Synod. His life's story was full of dedication to the Orthodox Church, and he had served as Secretary of the Synod for almost two decades. Someone had called the Chancellor's Office and had reported that "someone" at "sometime" had done "something" 25 years previously. Chancellor Garklavs had his hands tied with how to proceed as there wasn't the slightest bit of information to go on, and there was apparently nothing to investigate.

Metropolitan Jonah was brand new to his job when he was faced with the task of deciding how to handle the pastoral care of Archbishop Seraphim Storheim, who at that point had no charges brought against him. Metropolitan Jonah sent Archbishop Seraphim to the Monastery of St. John (the monastery he founded), in Manton, California, for a time of reflection, prayer, and spiritual retreat under the guidance of the Abbot who took his place there (Fr. Meletios) and Dr. David Fontes, a respected psychologist. Did Metropolitan Jonah wrestle and struggle with how to balance his pastoral obligations to Archbishop Seraphim, who was to be treated innocent until proven guilty, and how to meet the needs of one of his brother bishops who was alleged to have been involved in some sort of sinful act, but as yet had not been specifically accused of anything?

Sending Archbishop Seraphim to the monastery for spiritual counseling was the first course of action Metropolitan Jonah chose. He sent Archbishop Seraphim to visit with Fr. Meletios and Fr. David. Both wrote reports of their conversations with Archbishop Seraphim (not "professional" reports of "evaluation") and sent them to Metropolitan Jonah.

The SMPAC Memorandum states:

His Beatitude subsequently failed to provide Dr. Fontes' letter, which contained sensitive information, to the Holy Synod, to the Office for Review, to the SMPAC, or to the OCA's legal counsel, even after the OCA was notified that the Canadian law enforcements officials had begun an investigation in response to the allegations of sexual misconduct... This could constitute a possible obstruction of justice... It required the collective intervention of the SMPAC, the Metropolitan Counsel Legal Committee, and the OCA General Counsel for the documents to be released to the Crown with the authorization of Bishop Tikhon and Bishop Melchisedek... Furthermore, His Beatitude made the statement to the Holy Synod that 'nothing reportable was discovered' although this is a contradiction to the facts.[xlx]

What did Archbishop Seraphim tell Dr. Fontes, who in turn told Metropolitan Jonah in that letter? According to the SMPAC, Metropolitan Jonah made a statement that there was "nothing to report." However, as the SMPAC has no data or evidence or even a date for that alleged statement, it is hard to discern the significance of this letter. At the point that Archbishop Seraphim met Dr. Fontes, there were no charges against him.

During this time, Metropolitan Jonah was working with the OCA hierarchy on the sexual misconduct policies and procedures (covered in the first part of this summary). What a challenging situation to be in—working towards finding a way to confront sexual misconduct proactively, but also trying to protect the innocence of the accused, who must be supported until such time as guilt is determined. If a clergy member finds himself accused of an alleged crime, in which there are no victims who have come forth, in which there are no specific allegations made to be investigated—what is the role of the Church? Is the Church to protect its faithful clergy from non-specific allegations which could actually be legal slander?

### **Case #3: Abp. Seraphim Storheim. Letters Between Pokrov and Syossett**

On April 11, 2009, Cappy Larson, editor at Pokrov.org, an internet site dedicated to protecting children from sexual abuse by clergy, wrote to Chancellor Alexander Garklavs regarding Archbishop Seraphim:

<blockquote>We are aware of the fact that these allegations are twenty-five years old and they were reported to the OCA when the alleged abuse occurred. It is our understanding that there is an original report in the files at Syosset. And yet, Storheim was found fit to be consecrated by the OCA Synod of Bishops. We find this outrageous considering the fact that we heard of another report of abuse allegations against Storheim from North Carolina.

We know that there are at least two victims in Canada who were ten years old when the alleged abuse took place. We also know that the boys stated that other boys were abused as well. We know that they received a letter of apology from then Father Seraphim Storheim...

We know that Storheim was sent to Metropolitan Jonah's former monastery in Manton, CA, a couple weeks ago to supposedly be evaluated. Evaluated for what? Even though these 25 year old allegations resurfaced in October of 2008, this man has still not been temporarily relieved of his duties pending a thorough investigation. We assume that no parents in the Diocese of Canada have been warned of this danger. As you may or may not be aware, pedophiles rarely stop abusing especially those who abuse very young children (11 and under). What attempts have been made to find any additional victims?...

According to the OCA's own guidelines, any alleged abuse of minors should be reported to the authorities. Has the OCA made a police report to the authorities in Canada? It is my understanding that there is no statute of limitations in Canada. The abuse of minors is not something that should be handled internally by the OCA.[1]

One day later, April 12, 2009, Chancellor Garklavs responded to Ms. Larson:

In response to your email, it must be said with absolutely no equivocation that the Orthodox Church in America does not possess any direct information from alleged victims of any kind of abuse by Archbishop Seraphim. We have received a letter in which second hand information about allegations regarding Archbishop Seraphim were communicated to us. I have been in touch with the person who wrote that letter and have asked that he contact the alleged victims, and that he instruct them to confidentially contact our office. I have spoken with this person several times, attempting to obtain information, either names of or information about the victims. As of yet, we have not received any information from any alleged victims. The person who has reported this has not provided any information that would commence a course of action, including informing Canadian authorities.

As it stands, we only have the claim of one individual who asserts that he knows about such allegations, but not the facts which would put into motion the necessary investigation. There are no written records in our Chancery, nor have I received any verbal communication that these allegations were brought to the OCA twenty-five years ago. I do not know if they were communicated to someone orally at that time. The person who wrote the letter, who claims that the allegations were true, did tell me that he shared "something" with "someone" in confession twenty-five years ago. He did not elaborate on what the "something" was nor who the "someone" is.

About North Carolina: we do not have anything in our files (i.e., Archbishop Seraphim's files) about any incident(s) that took place there. I do not know what took place at St. John's Monastery in Manton, CA, when Archbishop Seraphim was there. I do know that Metropolitan Jonah and Archbishop Seraphim have spoken several times in private. I also know that members of the Holy Synod are aware of and concerned about the matters described in your email.

Based on what we now know, there is no reason to believe that either the Holy Synod or the OCA in general has done anything improper in this case. Personally, I believe that the Holy Synod is composed of "good shepherds" who would not, under any circumstances, allow any danger or harm to come to members of our Orthodox flocks or anyone. As for myself, I find pedophilia and any form of abuse of children repugnant and reprehensible. I am confident that this is also the case for the members of the Holy Synod, and I am sure that I speak for all of us who work at the OCA Chancery, as well as all of the clergy in the Orthodox Church of America...[li]

On May 10, 2009, Ms. Larson replied back to Chancellor Garklavs:

I have taken the time to read and re-read your email. It tells me that the OCA plans to do nothing and that you and the Synod of Bishops are powerless to act in this situation. You admit that you and the entire Synod of Bishops are aware of these very serious allegations. I wrote in my first email that I have information from an additional source that states that there was a report of these allegations in the files at the OCA's headquarters in Syosset from twenty-five years ago. I suggest looking again, or asking the Synod of Bishops about what might have happened to it. I believe with a thorough and honest investigation it will be clear that the allegations were reported to the OCA twenty-five years ago. And it is baffling why Archbishop Seraphim was consecrated a bishop in light of these allegations without even an investigation...

You write, 'As it stands, we only have the claim of one individual who asserts that he knows about such allegations, but not the facts which would put into motion the necessary investigation.' It seems to me that you have things backwards. An investigation is necessary in order to find out what the facts are in this case. There usually are no facts until after a thorough investigation has been completed.

Are you saying that the OCA does not take seriously the allegations that a victim (in this case two victims) reports to an Orthodox Priest? I think that is a very "direct" report (to use your word). Archbishop Seraphim surely knows who these boys are. Have you asked him? Maybe this is where the investigation could start...

I'm surprised that you know nothing about Archbishop Seraphim's trip to Manton, CA, and his 'evaluation' there. I would think that the Chancellor of the OCA would have more information than I have. Two 'professionals' allegedly evaluated him. But I question this internal evaluation, which was done at a monastery, in secret, without even the knowledge of the OCA Chancellor. Especially when you say that you are the one who is in contact with the source of the allegations...[lii]

On July 15, 2009, Metropolitan Jonah himself wrote a letter to Ms. Larson:

Dear Ms. Larson,

I am writing in response to your recent correspondence concerning His Eminence Archbishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada.

I want to assure you that I, together with the other members of the OCA Holy Synod of Bishops and all of those who work with us in the administration of the Orthodox Church in America have taken this matter very seriously. Although no formal accusation has been made by the alleged victims in this matter, we are pursuing an investigation as per the OCA's established guidelines.

Assuring you of my continued prayers, I remain,

Yours in Christ,

+Jonah  
Archbishop of Washington  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

I do not know what happened behind the scenes after Metropolitan Jonah's letter. Chancellor Garklavs, writing as a member of the SMPAC, apparently was not happy with Metropolitan Jonah's communication with Pokrov.org:

In a letter, His Beatitude publicly told Pokrov, the Orthodox victims advocacy group, that an investigation into the allegations against Archbishop Seraphim was taking place, implying that the interviews by Frs. Meletios and Fontes constituted professional evaluations. Beside a conversation with two priests, no investigation was duly performed—no witnesses were interviewed, no evidence was gathered.

### **Case #3: Abp. Seraphim Storheim. Syosset Tells +Jonah to Back Off**

Metropolitan Jonah, who had been scolded publically for his “unilateral” actions in the Fr. Simeon case, was told by Chancellor Garklavs to remove himself entirely from “the Seraphim matter”. He was told to “not be involved” with anything pertaining to Archbishop Seraphim's investigation. He believed that the Chancellor was working with the SMPAC, and as the Synod had been so opposed to his hands-on, up-close-and-personal style of dealing with the Fr. Simeon and the nuns matter, he took the advice of his Chancellor and others whom he trusted. Metropolitan Jonah explained his actions to the SMPAC:

Over the past year, I have had very little personal contact with the members of the Sexual Misconduct committee. In no way did I want to interfere in their work, and it was my understanding, based on good advice by the Chancellor and several others, such as [], that I and my office should be at arms' length from any investigations. On the Seraphim matter, I was also told by Garklavs to ‘not be involved.’

I believe in the advice that the Chancellor gave to Metropolitan Jonah. It was very sound advice. The Metropolitan of the Church should not be involved in the daily legal and criminal investigation process

of investigations like this. He tried initially to be involved by responding pastorally to Archbishop Seraphim, and then contacting Pokrov.org directly to assure them that he would take the claim seriously and work towards an investigation. I am glad that Chancellor Garklavs did intervene and tell Metropolitan Jonah to stay out of the investigation process.

It is dumb-founding then to read the SMPAC's (which, if you recall, includes Chancellor Garklav) assessment of Metropolitan Jonah's involvement in Archbishop Seraphim's situation:

### **Case #3: Abp. Seraphim Storheim. SMPAC Blames +Jonah for Backing Off**

He treated responses to issues arising within the Archdiocese of Canada with an almost total lack of urgency and interest... The much-needed ability to recognize the crisis, to provide proper administrative leadership, and to show even a little concern for the events as they unfolded did not materialize. His Beatitude has not once met with the professionals available to him to be briefed on the case or to offer direction and guidance.[lvi]

We do not know all of what occurred during 2010 behind the scenes in regards to Archbishop Seraphim. Archbishop Seraphim continued to deny all allegations. No victims came forward for an investigation to be done. No charges were brought against Archbishop Seraphim, and it appeared there was no criminal action to investigate. There are a lot of people who make a lot of fallacious claims. Allegations fly globally on the internet, and slander of others seems to rule the day. Archbishop Seraphim was a beloved leader in the OCA. There seemed to be just one person who was spreading rumors that "something" might have happened to "someone" a distant twenty-five years ago. The Chancellor repeatedly asked this person to ask the alleged victims to come forward.

The entire system of handling sexual misconduct claims was being revamped at the time this happened, and I understand that the policies and guidelines were a "work in progress." It is heartbreaking though that one of the SMPAC members (the Chancellor, or Dr. Nikita Eike—psychologist) didn't just pick up the phone to try to reach out and contact these two victims. While it is true that everyone seemed to be following the OCA policies and guidelines (no victim, no crime to investigate, etc...), there were two souls—God's own children, made in His image—who apparently were telling "someone" that they had been injured in a most horrific manner.

Cases like this are very difficult to navigate, full of complexities and legal complications. I pray with all my heart that the entire OCA hierarchy will throw their utmost effort into streamlining the Sexual Misconduct codes and policies so that this mess will never, ever happen again. There needs to be extremely specific language that details exactly what will be done, and by whom, the moment an allegation of child abuse (even if seemingly unbelievable) is brought to the attention of anyone in the Chancery.

### **Case #3: Abp. Seraphim Storheim. The Continuing Chronology According to Pokrov**

Events followed as reported on Ms. Larson's website:

On October 1, 2010, the Canadian archdiocese announced that Storheim had been given a 3 month leave of absence by the OCA's synod of bishops. The letter suggested that the leave was for health reasons. Two days later, the OCA followed up with its own announcement, revealing that the archbishop was being investigated by the Canadian police for "misconduct" and that this was why Storheim had been given leave. The OCA further announced that its "Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations" would "work in conjunction with the Canadian police." SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, then put out a press release on October 5, 2010, revealing that the police were investigating historical charges of child sexual abuse. The OCA announced on October 29, 2010, that it was forming a "synodal commission" to investigate the allegations against Storheim.[lvii]

On November 5, 2010, Metropolitan Jonah wrote an open letter to the OCA:

We are taught by Our Lord that the truth will set us free. We welcome the truth as the only basis for compassion and the sole means by which the healing of all those affected may take place. Love, mercy, compassion and truth are the fundamental principles of our response to one another. May we be so graced to seek that truth, to accept it, and to see in it yet another opportunity to refocus our attention on 'the life of the world to come.'

As you know, His Eminence, Archbishop Seraphim of the Archdiocese of Canada, is on a leave of absence. As has been reported by the Church, he is the subject of a recent investigation into allegations of events which date back many years. To date, no formal charges have been filed.

With regard to sexual misconduct, the Church is clear. It is an aberration, a tragedy that cannot be tolerated. Our goal as the Church is to investigate all allegations within the limitations imposed on us by the circumstances of each case and to cooperate fully with the appropriate authorities.

It is critical for us to focus on pastoral responses that are free of speculation regarding the outcome of the allegations. We must show compassion to all parties—the victims and the accused, their families, and the entire Church community. We must neither speculate nor prejudge the results of any investigation. At the same time, it is essential for us as a Church to focus on the pastoral care of all parties involved and all those affected by this situation. Even when we deal with situations in which various people in the Church are in adversarial positions, we must show compassion and love to all parties.

On October 3, 2010, I blessed the Church's Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations to work in conjunction with the Canadian authorities and to comply with the Orthodox Church in America's policies and procedures in order to obtain the necessary information required to bring about a proper resolution. After review by the Office and in consultation with its members, the Holy Synod of Bishops appointed a Commission to devote particular attention to the specific allegations against Archbishop Seraphim. The membership of that Commission have been announced publicly. Anyone with relevant information will be given access to the Commission directly. We must be prepared to receive the results of the investigation, regardless of what they may be. And, as Church, we must resolve the matter in a manner that benefits the salvation of everyone involved, regardless of the outcome.

Despite the depth of the pain this matter has engendered throughout the Orthodox Church in America, we are coming together with faith and love. I especially want to assure the faithful of the Archdiocese of Canada that the depth of their pain is felt by the entire People of God. For a quarter of a century, the Archdiocese of Canada has grown spiritually under Archbishop Seraphim. The unswerving faith of the Archdiocese's faithful, coupled with the Archpastoral guidance of Bishop Irene, will only serve to hasten the healing process.

In conclusion, the investigations are in the competent hands of the appropriate civil authorities and the Church's Synodal Commission. The Archdiocese of Canada is in the good hands of Bishop Irene. We pray for the patience required to allow them to complete their work.

We need to pray for everyone involved - for the authorities, the Commission, the accusers, the Archdiocese of Canada, Bishop Irene, Archbishop Seraphim, the families of all involved and for each other, that all will be blessed with God's peace, love and healing.[lviii]

A summary of events was reported on Ms. Larson's Pokrov website:

On November 16, 2010, the Winnipeg police issued an arrest warrant for Storheim. He flew to Winnipeg from Edmonton and turned himself into the police on November 24. The archbishop, through his attorney, denied the allegations. Storheim was questioned by the authorities and then was released after posting a \$500 bond and surrendering his passport. The terms of his release also forbade Storheim from having contact with minors. At a special meeting on November 30, 2010, the OCA's synod of bishops suspended Storheim.[lix]

Bishop Irene of Quebec and a group of Canadian OCA members openly and vociferously supported Archbishop Seraphim and did not believe the charges against him. They began fundraising for Archbishop Seraphim's legal defense fund and sent an "Open Letter to the OCA Synod" with their questions about Archbishop Seraphim's suspension.

Their open letter was answered on November 15, 2011, by Bishop Tikhon, who had replaced Archbishop Seraphim as the Secretary of the Synod:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America in order to clarify any confusion or concern that might have arisen surrounding the matter of His Eminence, Archbishop Seraphim and the recent allegations of sexual misconduct brought against him.

First, I would like to state that the members of the Holy Synod care deeply about the spiritual, physical and emotional well-being of their brother bishop and are praying for a speedy resolution to this difficult situation. Every action which the Holy Synod has taken on behalf of Archbishop Seraphim was taken prayerfully and with concern both for his own protection in that regard and the protection of the entire Church.

In this context, the suspension of Archbishop Seraphim was in accordance with canonical order and with the Policies, Standards and Procedures of the Orthodox Church in America on Sexual Misconduct (PSP) as approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops in 2003. In section 9.01(a) of that document it is stated: if allegations of sexual misconduct involve a member of the clergy as a

respondent, the Bishop will inform him of the complaint and may, pending resolution of the allegations, suspend him, with pay, from further service in the Church under such terms and conditions as the Bishop determine appropriate.

In this particular case, it was the entire Holy Synod that took this action since the matter involved an accusation against a bishop. It should be stated clearly that "suspension" in this case, and in all cases involving accusations of sexual misconduct, refers to a procedural suspension rather than a disciplinary suspension.

In other words, the suspension does not create any inference of capability or innocence, and shall not be construed as an indicator of the final disposition of the matter (PSP 9.01 d). As such the Holy Synod has in no way pre-judged His Eminence, nor should anyone else do so.

Following the suspension of Archbishop Seraphim, a Synodal Commission was appointed to investigate the allegations as well as to determine if the Church had responded properly in this matter. The Synodal Commission has been operational since January 2011, holding meetings by teleconference every two or three weeks.

The Holy Synod is aware that some of its actions may have been perceived as unfair or biased. It is not our intention to be so and we are continually reviewing the manner in which the Church responds to these matters. This continual review includes matters such as the removal of His Eminence's picture from the OCA website, which has been the practice in the past and is intended more as a means to minimize any unpleasantness for His Eminence than to punish or pre-judge him. There are also legal factors that need to be taken into consideration.

The Holy Synod offers its thanks for your love and concern for His Eminence, Archbishop Seraphim and wishes to assure the clergy and the faithful of the Archdiocese that every member of the Holy Synod continues to pray for the health and well-being of Vladyka Seraphim. We know that the Lord Himself will strengthen him and grant him His abundant grace during this difficult time.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Tikhon  
Bishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania  
Secretary of the Holy Synod[lx]

On January 21, 2012, the Synod offered the following statement to the OCA:

The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America has been made aware that His Eminence, Archbishop Seraphim, the suspended Archbishop of Ottawa and Canada, appeared in a Winnipeg criminal court on January 18, 2012. Archbishop Seraphim is a defendant in a matter involving allegations of sexual abuse toward a minor or minors. The case has been committed for trial.

Archbishop Seraphim originally was placed on a leave of absence on October 1, 2010, shortly after the Lesser Synod of Bishops had been informed that a police investigation had

commenced. On November 30, 2010, the Holy Synod of Bishops changed his status to ‘suspended,’ and he retains that status. The Holy Synod appointed a Special Commission to conduct an internal investigation into the allegations. The Synodal Commission has been in communication with civil authorities and has held its investigation in abeyance so as not to interfere with or compromise the judicial process. Once the court matters have concluded, the Synodal Commission will complete its work and issue a report to the Holy Synod in accordance with the sexual misconduct Policies, Standards and Procedures of the OCA.

While this is a sad and stressful matter for all involved, the legal process must take its course in order to arrive at the truth and eventual resolution. Archbishop Seraphim has retained legal counsel. While taking an active interest in the proceedings, the OCA is not a party to the criminal action and has no information to impart regarding trial progress. As is always the case in Canadian criminal matters, he remains innocent unless proven guilty in court.[lxi]

### **Case #3: Abp. Seraphim Storheim. SMPAC Blames +Jonah Again**

Summing up their displeasure with the manner Metropolitan Jonah handled this third of three cases of sexual misconduct, the SMPAC wrote in their Memorandum:

...His Beatitude did not take an active interest or directly participate in the response to this crisis. The sense of importance and transparency by His Beatitude of the Synodal Commission process/mandate were absent, until pressure was brought to bear by the SMPAC to approve the mandate. He treated responses to issues arising within the Archdiocese of Canada with an almost total lack of urgency and interest. Little pastoral care or concern was shown toward the Canadian members of the OCA in the face of serious allegations of child abuse brought against their archpastor. Little guidance was offered to them, resulting in several serious, and potentially legally damaging, missteps in how the Archdiocese of Canada dealt publicly with the crisis. The much needed ability to recognize the crisis, to provide proper administrative leadership, and to show even a little concern for the events as they unfolded did not materialize. His Beatitude has not once met with the professionals available to him to be briefed on the case or to offer direction and guidance.[lxii]

This is a very grave injustice done to Metropolitan Jonah. Metropolitan Jonah, who was by no accounts able to on his own, navigate the legal proceedings of the criminal investigation, followed the advice of his Chancellor and others, who basically told him to “stay out of it” and let the SMPAC do their work. Then the Chancellor (a member of the SMPAC) knowingly distorted to the Synod and other SMPAC members the Metropolitan’s actions and made it sound as if Metropolitan Jonah showed “little concern”.

Also troubling is the fact that Metropolitan Jonah is receiving the full brunt of responsibility on his shoulders from SMPAC. Bishop Tikhon specifically wrote to the OCA faithful of Canada: "In this particular case, it was the entire Holy Synod that took this action since the matter involved an accusation against a bishop." So, when accusations involve a brother bishop, the entire Synod must be involved? So why then is Metropolitan Jonah the scapegoat?

As of September 6, 2012, Archbishop Seraphim has pled “Not Guilty” of the charges brought against

him. The trial of Archbishop Seraphim will be broadcast for all the world to see. May God have mercy.

### **Case #3: Abp. Seraphim Storheim. Two Points Regarding the SMPAC Complaint Against Met. Jonah**

Two other points that the SMPAC raised in their Memorandum, in addition to the three sexual misconduct cases, should also be addressed here before we come to Metropolitan Jonah's response.

Metropolitan Jonah apparently hurt the feelings of the SMPAC members by referring to them as "a pool of amateurs". He had appointed Fr. Gregory Jensen as a consultant to the Office for Review, and SMPAC members responded by saying that the appointment "undermined the confidence of the faithful and all those who are looking at the OCA's manner of operating in the area of sexual misconduct issues." [lxiii] Then, "Fr. Jensen contacted Pokrov as a representative of the OCA, with the blessing of the Beatitude, in order to offer a joint response to cases of sexual misconduct." I can understand his attempts for transparency and truth, and teaming up with Pokrov was an admirable goal. Metropolitan Jonah has the heart for reconciliation. He is a peacemaker and does not like conflict. However, attempts to play nice might have worked at the monastery for him, but it did not translate well to the political games in the big league.

Another accusation is that Metropolitan Jonah "marginalized" the Crisis Management Committee and its Crisis Plan, created by the Metropolitan Council. The SMPAC wrote, "His Beatitude showed very little interest in such a plan" [lxiv] and insinuates that if only Metropolitan Jonah had valued The Plan, that everything would have been different. They even wrote, "His Beatitude stood in the way of proper and dispassionate crisis management and the investigatory processes, and the OCA will pay the price, not only in treasure but very likely in souls."

### **Case #3: Abp. Seraphim Storheim. SMPAC's Conclusion**

And so the SMPAC Memorandum concludes:

Since the inception of the SMPAC, we have encountered numerous situations where we could not reconcile the statements, decisions, or conduct of His Beatitude with the Sexual Misconduct Policies, the Best Practices of the OCA, or our Orthodox Ethos. His Beatitude has often stated that he is not interested in administration. Such a position is incompatible with his role as Metropolitan and the proper functioning of the Office for Review, for which His Beatitude has the authority under the oversight of the Holy Synod.

His Beatitude's decision-making process exposes members of the OCA to risks, to further abuse, and to possible lawsuits. Our concern for the Church and for His Beatitude is based on our observation that the common denominator in all the situations described above is a pattern of responding to problems. That pattern, unfortunately, is not the result of accidental mistakes. If those choices were simply mistakes, we would expect to see an improvement with each successive situation, rather than a seemingly endless repetition of decisions that have proven to be unworkable, erroneous, or dangerous. Nothing seems to be learned by His Beatitude from incident to incident. Rather, the maladaptive behavior of offering misinformation, changing positions, and then denying that such a change occurred

repeats itself in each new situation.

We trust that the Holy Synod discerns the painful reality that this Memorandum underscores and will guide the OCA on its difficult road toward recovery. Although it will not be painless, a solution to the current situation must be found. If the current tragedy involving Archbishop Seraphim was not damaging enough, to continue on the present course will be to allow the OCA to deteriorate through one crisis after another, until soon we are no longer viable as a Church. It is likely that should a civil suit be brought against the OCA in the case of the allegations against Archbishop Seraphim, the OCA could become bankrupt. We, the members of the SMPAC, feel obligated to bring these issues to your attention because, in an autocephalous Church, the Holy Synod represents the highest authority, including oversight of the actions of the primate.[lxv]

### **Case #3: Abp. Seraphim Storheim. Met. Jonah's Response**

While the anti-Metropolitan SIC Report and SMPAC Memorandum were illegally leaked to Pokrov.org following the worldwide outcry after Metropolitan Jonah's forced resignation, curiously Metropolitan Jonah's responses to those reports were not leaked. Even more curious, indeed, was the lack of any announcement by the Synod or Syosset for an investigation into the leaks of highly confidential Church documents to the press. And of course, it is distressing that the OCA, upon being made aware of the leaked documents, did not provide Metropolitan Jonah's responses so that the world could hear his defense against the allegations that caused his removal.

It is with great appreciation to Rod Dreher for providing Metropolitan Jonah's response to the SMPAC Memorandum on the website [www.monomakhos.com](http://www.monomakhos.com), hosted by George Michalopoulos. Only a portion of Metropolitan Jonah's written response to the SMPAC Memorandum is quoted here, but in this section he addresses the distortions and misstatements of the SMPAC's Memorandum.

Metropolitan Jonah wrote:

What is evident here is that there is a constant pattern of mutual mistrust. In my reading of the SMPAC Memo, there is actually no instance of factual disregard by me of the policies or Sexual Misconduct Guidelines. There are certainly areas which I do and have questioned. I have disagreed about timing (Abp Seraphim [Storheim] investigation, in conversation with Bp Nikon). I have disagreed about whether something is in the purview of the diocese or central administration (Symeon). There are areas in which I have indeed disagreed with the advice given me by the Synod (in regards to the nuns in DC) and senior staff. But I have never disregarded the advice given me by the Sexual Misconduct Committee, but have taken it and them seriously; however few and far between are the times that they have bothered to contact me.

Is it not my role and prerogative as Metropolitan to weigh the advice and information given to me, to be able to express and work out my opinions with the Synod (as in the above correspondence), or with other advisors, and make a decision based on that? Or am I bound by the committees and the church's officers?

Are these committees advisory, or are they in control of the Metropolitan and Synod? I think

advisory.

Never have I intended to deceive or mislead anyone about anything.

Undoubtedly I have omitted pieces of stories, which may not have come to mind, given the context of a particular conversation. But neither have I always been given a full picture of what is going on. Had I been asked about a missing piece, I would of course have given it. I believe this is simply part of normal human behavior, and without malice.

There is one area, 7.02, of the Sexual Misconduct Guidelines that has proven to be extremely problematic: the day to day oversight by the Chancellor. I have previously expressed my view that this is a problem. But the personalities involved have made it a far greater problem than it should have been.

Is not the role of the Chancellor to keep the Metropolitan informed, and when he makes a mistake, to help him correct it, for the good of the Church; rather than to throw all of his mistakes back in his face?

Is it the role of the Metropolitan to have to pry information out of the Chancellor, or the Chancellor's role to constantly keep the Metropolitan informed of whatever is going on, regardless of the personal presence of the Metropolitan or not?

Is it the role of the Chancellor to oversee such a project as this Memorandum, entirely behind the back and secretly, and not even giving the Metropolitan a copy of the product? Is this not complete insubordination?

It is repeated that I do not like the work of administration. I do, however, have an administrative style: I delegate great amounts of authority to those whom I give particular areas of work, and then hold them accountable. It is based on trust. I am not hands-on, and I am not in any way a micromanager. I should not have to be.

I expect that those to whom such authority is delegated will be able to handle it, and be accountable. I admit freely administration is not my gift, and that is why we hire administrators. That is what a chancellor is hired to do: to do the day to day work of administration, to keep the Metropolitan informed, and give him the necessary information to make decisions. The chancellor's work is to support the work of the Metropolitan's office, and make up the deficits in his abilities. It remains, however, the responsibility of the Metropolitan to make all final decisions. It should be a team, along with the rest of the staff, which is built on the foundation of trust. However, that trust was not earned, but rather squandered and betrayed. It had been before this report; now the damage is irreparable. Forgiveness, yes; trust, no.

In almost every case of the instances in this memo, the sole contact between the Sexual Misconduct Committee and myself was the chancellor. Every piece of information went through him, and it is his interpretation that was given to them for their own consideration. Almost everything in this document is twisted to put a negative perspective on me. I am not claiming to be without error. However, what is presented here is a grave travesty, and is a malicious caricature of the truth, not to mention mortal sin, if not also a canonical infraction.

Over the past year, I have had very little personal contact with the members of the Sexual Misconduct committee. In no way did I want to interfere in their work, and it was my understanding, based on good advice by the Chancellor and several others, such as [], that I and my office should be at arms' length from any investigations. On the Seraphim matter, I was also told by Garklavs to "not be involved." Am I to be condemned for paying attention to their advice?

There are several underlying issues. What is the role of these committees in relation to the Metropolitan and Synod? Are they advisory, or are the Met and Synod subject to their decision? What is the role of the Chancellor? Is he the one to whom the Metropolitan and Synod owe obedience and accountability? Or is the Chancellor accountable to the Metropolitan, and through the Metropolitan to the Synod? For whom does the chancellor work: the Metropolitan, or the Metropolitan Council? Is a bishop compelled to go through the central Sexual Misconduct Committee, or can things be handled on a diocesan basis? Can the central administration intervene in such an investigation without being so requested by the Diocesan Bishop?

Ultimately, who is in charge of this Church: the Bishops or the Metropolitan Council and/or the Chancellor? For the past few years, since Met. Herman abrogated his responsibility, it has been the Metropolitan Council. Before that, with a dysfunctional metropolitan, it was the Chancellor. Do we want that? Are we going to be an Orthodox Church, or some kind of Byzantine rite episcopalianism, where the bishops are present but have no authority?

This Committee was under my authority, and this report was compiled secretly, behind my back. That is insubordination. Transparency? Accountability? Absolutely none. It was the responsibility of the Chancellor to not only let me know how my actions were being interpreted, but to inform me of the necessary steps to explain my actions. Would you demand anything different of our chancellors? He failed in that, and in fact nurtured these misperceptions for his own reasons, and to his own perceived benefit. This is a complete betrayal of trust, and of his basic responsibility to upbuild the Church, rather than tear it down.

The SMPAC Memo is not about sexual misconduct, but is about the relationship of the Metropolitan and the Chancellor. The Chancellor, in the name of the committee, does not like the Metropolitan's style of administration. Their document presents opinion and impressions, not facts. There is nothing documented. There are no canonical breaches, and in fact no breaches of policy or the Misconduct Guidelines that can be cited. This memorandum is politics, nothing else. Their judgments are insulting, and I demand an apology. While this report is a grievous canonical breach, for the peace of the Church I would prefer not to take action.

As Metropolitan, I reject this report, and seeking the support of the Holy Synod, demand its retraction and consign it to permanent confidentiality.[lxvi]

At the February 2011 All-American Council in Santa Fe, the Metropolitan agreed to go on a short leave of absence for a time of counseling, reflection and spiritual renew. A statement that the Metropolitan was being put on a “leave of absence” was entered into the minutes of the proceedings. Metropolitan Jonah took a modified break for two months and resumed his duties in April 2011.

The Minutes of the May 4-5, 2011, spring session of the joint meeting of the Synod with the Metropolitan Council, report:

Metropolitan Jonah spoke of a trying Great Lent with many temptations, but the Resurrection prevailed. Without temptations, he said, there is no salvation. He stated that he stands together with his brother bishops on a vision of how to work together. The meeting of the Holy Synod was a turning point in their relationship and they have come together in a spirit of unity. An increasingly difficult time occurred at the chancery over several months including a series of temptations and building reciprocal distrust that led to the impossibility of Fr. Alexander Garklavs continuing as chancellor. There was a deep disconnect and a mutual sense of betrayal. Metropolitan Jonah requested Fr. Garklavs resignation. Metropolitan Jonah expressed his own gratitude and that of the Holy Synod to Fr. Garklavs for his work through a very difficult period throughout his years in the position during the end of Metropolitan Herman’s primacy and afterwards. Although a working relationship did not develop well between Metropolitan Jonah and Fr. Garklavs, Fr. Garklavs’ service is commendable.

Metropolitan Jonah also reported that at the Santa Fe meeting of the Holy Synod, he was asked to take a leave of absence for rest and medical evaluation. He stated that, although he did not go to the institution requested by the Holy Synod, he did get solid evaluations and found the leave to be refreshing... He also noted that going forward we must discern together how to run the Church more efficiently and to revise the OCA Statute accordingly, if necessary. Over the next six months, he particularly noted the upcoming All-American Council where the Strategic Plan will be considered. He suggested that to ease tensions, the war of words on the internet stop and that the warring websites be shut down... He appealed for a refocusing on Christ and a renewed commitment to the Gospel.

An extensive discussion took place concerning the issues raised in the Metropolitan’s remarks, during which the Holy Synod presented in detail the four resolutions it had adopted concerning OCA governance going forward. The resolutions, found in the public minutes of the Holy Synod of Bishops posted on the OCA web site, deal with Locum Tenency, the Officers of the Church, the Permanent Lesser Synod, and the Chancellor. It was explained that the newly adopted policies and procedures are an expansion and interpretation of the OCA Statute and are provisional pending possible eventual amendment of the Statute.

Metropolitan Jonah acknowledged his shortcomings and personal need for leadership training, which he intends to pursue. Various perspectives were offered on the circumstances surrounding the resignation of Fr. Garklavs as OCA Chancellor... In order to achieve a common understanding of the causes of the breakdown in the working relationship of the Metropolitan and Fr. Garklavs, further discussion took place. A consensus emerged that their working relationship is now irreparable...

Father Alexander Garklavs addressed the hierarchs and Metropolitan Council, expressing

gratitude for the opportunity to work with the Holy Synod and the Metropolitan Council. He expressed his increased admiration for the unique governing structure of the OCA, epitomizing conciliarity, as outlined in its Statute. He offered his love and prayers to Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council for their continued good work for the Church. His comments were followed by a standing ovation.[lxvii]

It seems as if the OCA is still so new that it has not yet figured out how to divide the duties of administration. I was heartened to read the minutes, above, that discuss how the Synod and Metropolitan Council is looking to redistribute administrative duties into four distinct areas. Unfortunately, those necessary and vital changes will come too late for Metropolitan Jonah.

Metropolitan Jonah acknowledged the difficulties that existed between him and the Synod at the November 2011 All American Council:

These last three years have been the three most difficult years of my life. I have been under a relentless barrage of criticism for most of this time for every forum I am meant to oversee: the chancery officers and staff, the Metropolitan Council and most troubling to me, the Holy Synod of Bishops.

I admit that I have very little experience of administration and it was a risk for the 2008 Council to elect me, the newest and most inexperienced of bishops. I have worked very hard to fulfill your expectations. But this is not an excuse.

These three years have been an administrative disaster. And I need to accept full responsibility for that and for my part in it. I did not understand the depths of the breakdown with the bishops. I thought we had a good working relationship but obviously there is something very broken. I need to regain the confidence of my brother bishops and of many others in leadership positions in our Church. I tell you all here and now that I am deeply sorry for that and I ask your forgiveness.

How to get to the root of this breakdown in trust and repair it, if possible, is the real challenge for me and I am willing to do whatever is necessary, working in close collaboration with the Holy Synod. As a first step I have agreed to begin a process of discernment that will include a complete evaluation in a program that specializes in assisting clergy, starting the week of November 14th. I have chosen to do this out love for you, the people of the Church, and for my brother bishops.

I ask you all for your forgiveness, understanding, patience, prayers and support.

Was this breakdown between the Bishops, the Chancellor, and the Metropolitan deliberate? Did Metropolitan Jonah do it on purpose? Did others contribute to it too? Could it have been avoided? The SMPAC places all the blame solely on the shoulders of the Metropolitan. I find it difficult to believe that every single problem that arose between the Metropolitan and the Bishops was solely the fault of Metropolitan Jonah.

Metropolitan Jonah has not been accused of financial misconduct. He has not been accused of harming anyone. He has not been accused of abusing anyone. He has not been accused of engaging in sexual

misconduct. He has not been accused of having an addiction. He has not been accused of any crimes.

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**CASE #4: FR. SIMEON - PART II**

**Case #4: Fr. Simeon - Part II. Movement to Remove Met. Jonah: Contrived Charges**

And now we return to the sad tale of Fr. Simeon.

In spring 2012 it was alleged by a parishioner of the Washington DC parish that woman had been raped by Fr. Simeon two years previously, back on Sunday, April 4, 2010.

This was a most sinister turn of events. Fr. Simeon was not even in the country to address this allegation, and directly contradicts written evidence by the “rape victim”.

Metropolitan Jonah was told of this allegation of rape in May 2012.

This was not a new allegation. The SIC had already dealt with rumors of “rape” in its investigation and in their November 2011 report. After the incident with J, in which Fr. Simeon tried to put his arm around J and then was arrested for drunk and disorderly conduct, rumors flew around the St. Nicholas parish that Fr. Simeon had raped one of the nuns or that he had raped a woman back in January when he was living at the Chancery.

The SIC, in their investigation of Fr. Simeon, did not believe the rumors that Fr. Simeon had committed rape.

In fact, the SIC had concluded in 2010 that the charges of rape were “exaggerated” and “unfounded”. [lxx]

Did Metropolitan Jonah believe this to be a resurrected rumor that had already been resolved by the OCA SIC?

Evidently when Metropolitan Jonah was told in May that someone was accusing Fr. Simeon of rape, he tried to figure out if it was the same disproved rumor from two years previously, or a new rumor.

Shortly thereafter, the Synod asked him to resign.

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**METROPOLITAN JONAH RESIGNS**

On July 6, 2012, Metropolitan Jonah wrote the following letter to the Synod of the OCA:

Brothers,

As per your unanimous request, as conveyed to me by Chancellor Fr. John Jillions, I hereby tender my resignation as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, and humbly request another Episcopal assignment.

I had come to the realization long ago that I have neither the personality nor the temperament for the position of Primate, a position I never sought nor desired.

It is my hope that due consideration will be made for my financial situation, both in any interim and in consideration for any future position. I am the main financial support for both my parents and my sister, beyond my own needs.

I will appreciate your consideration in this, and beg forgiveness for however I have offended you, and for whatever difficulties have arisen from my own inadequacies and mistakes in judgment.

Asking your prayers, I remain faithfully yours,

+Jonah  
Metropolitan Jonah  
Archbishop of Washington

Witnessed

Archpriest John Jillions<br />  
Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America

### **The Synod Releases a Statement**

On July 16, 2012, the Synod released a statement to the world. They wrote:

Why did we ask Metropolitan Jonah to resign?

The most disturbing and serious matter, indeed the final matter that caused us to ask the Metropolitan to resign or take a leave of absence and enter a treatment program, involves the Metropolitan's poor judgment in critical matters of church governance, lack of adherence to the PSPs, and the risk of serious harm to at least one other person. While the names, dates, and other details must be held in confidence to minimize the risk of further harm, we can say the following.

At some point after his enthronement as our Primate, Metropolitan Jonah unilaterally accepted into the OCA a priest known to him and to others to be actively and severely abusing alcohol, which more than once was coupled with episodes of violence and threats toward women. One of these episodes involved the brandishing of a knife, and the other the discharge of a firearm, the former resulting in the man's arrest. The man was also incarcerated for three days in yet another incident, shortly after he was accepted into the OCA by Metropolitan Jonah. While under Metropolitan Jonah's omophorion, this priest is alleged to have committed a rape against a woman in 2010.

Metropolitan Jonah was later told of this allegation in February 2012, yet he neither investigated, nor told his brother bishops, nor notified the Church's lawyers, nor reported the matter to the police, nor in any other way followed the mandatory, non-discretionary PSPs of the OCA. The alleged victim, however, did report the rape to the police. We know, too, that the alleged victim and a relative were encouraged by certain others not to mention the incident, and were told by them that their salvation depended on their silence. As recently as last week Metropolitan Jonah was regularly communicating with one of those who tried to discourage the reporting of this crime by the alleged victim and her relative. In addition, the Metropolitan counseled the priest to pursue a military chaplaincy, without informing the military recruiter of any of the priest's problems. Finally, the Metropolitan attempted to transfer the priest to other Orthodox jurisdictions, and ultimately did permit him to transfer to another jurisdiction, in each case telling those jurisdictions there were no canonical impediments to a transfer.

We have started an investigation into the rape allegation, and cannot assume whether the allegation is true or not. We only know that earlier allegations of misconduct by this priest were handled by Metropolitan Jonah in a manner at a complete variance with the required standards of our Church.

Moral, canonical and inter-Orthodox relations issues aside, in light of the recent widely-publicized criminal cases involving sexual abuse at Penn State and in the Philadelphia Archdiocese and the Kansas City Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, the extent of the risk of liability to which the Metropolitan has exposed the church cannot be overstated.

...He has spoken unilaterally with and provided sensitive information to opposing counsel and opposing parties concerning pending and threatened litigation, although he had specifically been warned many times of the perils of doing so.

He gave to unauthorized persons a highly sensitive, painstakingly detailed internal Synodal report concerning numerous investigations into sexual misconduct, risking leaks of names of alleged victims and alleged perpetrators. While those who now possess the report are wrongfully in possession of OCA property, they have not yet returned their copies of these highly confidential and sensitive documents, further exposing our Church to potential legal liabilities...

Our request for Metropolitan Jonah's resignation, or that he take a leave of absence for treatment, came at the end of a rather long list of questionable, unilateral decisions and actions, demonstrating the inability of the Metropolitan to always be truthful and accountable to his peers. The Metropolitan's freely-chosen resignation has been characterized by him and others as the result of politics and internal discord among the members of the Holy Synod. Quite to the contrary, the other members of the Holy Synod stand firmly together in our unanimous astonishment at the Metropolitan's actions. We cannot stress enough that while the most recent events are likely the most dangerous for the Church, these represent only the latest in a long series of poor choices that have caused harm to our Church. We understand and agree that an ability to work or not work well with others, or a challenged administrative skill set, or Metropolitan Jonah's refusal to comply with the recommendations of the treatment facility, while not the reasons for his requested resignation, were fundamentally related to the consequences of his actions.

...After the developments of the past few weeks, we knew, individually and together acting in one accord as the Synod, that we could no longer exercise our duties as shepherds or as trustees and stewards without asking for the Metropolitan's resignation.[lxxi]

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### DECONSTRUCTING THE SYNOD'S STATEMENT

This document is nothing but one lie after another. The Synod knowingly distorted the facts about Metropolitan Jonah in this statement. Let us deconstruct each statement they make:

- “At some point after his enthronement as our Primate, Metropolitan Jonah unilaterally accepted into the OCA a priest known to him and to others to be actively and severely abusing alcohol, which more than once was coupled with episodes of violence and threats toward women. One of these episodes involved the brandishing of a knife, and the other the discharge of a firearm, the former resulting in the man's arrest. The man was also incarcerated for three days in yet another incident, shortly after he was accepted into the OCA by Metropolitan Jonah.”
- “At some point after his enthronement as our Primate, Metropolitan Jonah unilaterally accepted into the OCA...”
- “At some point” translates to the Synod not knowing exactly when Elder Dionysios released Fr. Simeon to Metropolitan Jonah. That is false. The SIC Report even provides the release statement from Moni Petras Monastery as an attachment, and the date on that document is very clear. As to “unilaterally accepted”, Metropolitan Jonah entered into an inter-jurisdictional agreement with Greek Elder Dionysios. It had already been pointed out to His Beatitude that the SIC did not agree that the transfer was canonical, but there was no deceit involved with the release documents. Metropolitan Jonah was informed that the transfer was not acceptable to the OCA, and Fr. Simeon was released from the OCA. Please see the first section on Fr. Simeon for details.
- ...a priest known to him and to others to be actively and severely abusing alcohol...”

Metropolitan Jonah wrote to Fr. Simeon: “Shortly after you arrived, I was suspicious that you were abusing alcohol.” The way the Synod wrote this sentence twists the truth. Metropolitan Jonah did NOT accept into the OCA a priest known to him and others to be actively and severely abusing alcohol. It was not until after Fr. Simeon was released from Greece and living in America that Metropolitan Jonah “suspected” the alcohol problem. Who are the “others” mentioned? Does the Synod mean Frs. Dubinin and Kokhno, who met Fr. Simeon at the request of Metropolitan Jonah, months after Fr. Simeon's release from Greece? It is a lie to say that Metropolitan Jonah knowingly accepted a priest into the OCA who was an alcoholic, because Metropolitan Jonah didn't know Fr. Simeon had alcohol issues when he accepted him into the OCA.

- “...which more than once was coupled with episodes of violence and threats towards women.”

These two events did not occur prior to April 2010 (the incident with J). The Synod's statement says that Metropolitan Jonah knew that Fr. Simeon was violent with women prior to the events actually happening. It is a lie for the Synod to say that Metropolitan Jonah knowingly accepted a violent, threatening priest into the OCA.

- “One of these episodes involved the brandishing of a knife, and the other the discharge of a firearm, the former resulting in the man's arrest.”

According to the SIC Report, “There was some conversation between them [Fr. Simeon and J]. At one point Fr. Simeon pulled out a knife to show J. He also spoke about smoking marijuana.” Fr. Simeon was arrested for drunk and disorderly conduct and for "taking a swing" at a police officer, not for “brandishing” a knife or violence against women. “The discharge of a firearm” did not happen until September of that year, five months later, well into SIC's investigation. The Synod states Metropolitan Jonah knew of these two incidences before they actually happened and that Metropolitan Jonah “knowingly” still approved of this priest.

- “The man was also incarcerated for three days in yet another incident, shortly after he was accepted into the OCA by Metropolitan Jonah.”

Metropolitan Jonah wrote to Fr. Simeon on May 19, 2010: “I was told there was another encounter with the police earlier this year, in which you ended up in custody for three days. You told me nothing about this either.” Metropolitan Jonah hid nothing from the SIC regarding this event. Why didn't the SIC investigate this other “encounter with the police” during their investigation in 2010? There is no indication they did so—or if they did, there was no sexual misconduct involved, or certainly they would have included it in their report.

- “While under Metropolitan Jonah's omophorion, this priest is alleged to have committed a rape against a woman in 2010.”

I will restate what I have written previously. This was not a new allegation, and the SIC had already dealt with this allegation in its November 2011 report. Rumors of a rape had been flying around back in 2010. At first the rumor was that Fr. Simeon had raped one of the nuns. The SIC thoroughly investigated the entire matter. Did Metropolitan Jonah believe this to be a resurrected rumor that had already been disproved by the OCA SIC? This was not a new allegation. It was an allegation that Metropolitan Jonah had already heard two years before, which had been disproved by SIC.

The SIC had concluded in 2010 that the charges of rape were “exaggerated” and “unfounded”.

- “Metropolitan Jonah was later told of this allegation in February 2012, yet he neither investigated, nor told his brother bishops, nor notified the Church's lawyers, nor reported the matter to the police, nor in any other way followed the mandatory, non-discretionary PSPs of the OCA...”

The godmother herself has allegedly testified that Metropolitan Jonah was only told of the allegation in May 2012.

Does the Synod mean "this allegation OF February 2012" instead of "this allegation IN February 2012"? The allegation made in February 2012 was later told to Metropolitan Jonah in May 2012. Is that what the Synod intended to write? If so, the language needs to be amended.

When he was told, Metropolitan Jonah apparently tried to assess if this new charge was the same old rumor from two years previous, or if it was a new allegation, and when the Synod found out that the woman had gone to the police to file charges, they asked for Metropolitan Jonah's resignation.

- "The alleged victim, however, did report the rape to the police. We know, too, that the alleged victim and a relative were encouraged by certain others not to mention the incident, and were told by them that their salvation depended on their silence."

Did the alleged victim report the alleged rape to the police in 2010? Or did she report the alleged rape in February 2012 when she was told that her family couldn't take up permanent residence in the Monastery? Or did she report it in May 2012? And when did these "certain others" encourage the alleged victim to not mention the incident? Was this back in 2010 or was this in 2012?

Metropolitan Jonah is NOT one of the "certain others" referred to in this statement. Unless there is proof that Metropolitan Jonah himself told the alleged victim that her salvation depends on her silence, then this has no bearing on Metropolitan Jonah himself and his involvement and should not be used against him. "Certain others" actions are not grounds for Metropolitan Jonah's forced resignation.

- "As recently as last week Metropolitan Jonah was regularly communicating with one of those who tried to discourage the reporting of this crime by the alleged victim and her relative."

Guilt by association? Did the Synod just go there? Seriously?

So, first Metropolitan Jonah is accused of his "indifference" to these sexual misconduct situations. Then, when he hears the rumor yet again that Fr. Simeon may have raped someone, he tries to figure out (by calling first-hand witnesses and those involved) if this was related to the formerly-disproven allegation or if it was new. And now he is faulted for trying to talk with those who might be aware of information relating to this allegation? This is a travesty.

The Synod has essentially convicted Fr. Simeon of rape in a court of their own making. And they have convicted Metropolitan Jonah in a court of their own making.

- "In addition, the Metropolitan counseled the priest to pursue a military chaplaincy, without informing the military recruiter of any of the priest's problems."

According to the SIC Report: "Sometime in March 2010, Metropolitan Jonah asked Fr. Peter Dubinin, an OCA Chaplain (Major) whose assignment is to recruit for military chaplaincy, to speak with Fr. Simeon about becoming a chaplain. It appears that Fr. Simeon did not speak with Fr. Peter at that time." [lxxii] This was prior to any incident, and Metropolitan Jonah only had a suspicion at that point that Fr. Simeon had a drinking problem.

Fr. Simeon appeared in court on June 15. There were no charges brought against Fr. Simeon. “Following the June 15 court appearance, His Beatitude accepted the claims of Fr. Simeon and Abbess Ameliane that Fr. Simeon was ‘exonerated’ and there were ‘no charges against him.’”[lxxiii]

Two days later, “On June 17, 2010, His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah asked Fr. Alexander Garklavs to arrange with Fr. Peter Dubinin for a meeting with Fr. Simeon in Washington at St. Nicholas Cathedral. His Beatitude indicated that military chaplaincy could be a good option for Fr. Simeon; he did not mention anything about a drinking problem or the misconduct incident. A meeting was arranged for Sunday, June 20. Fr. Peter meets with Fr. Simeon at the Cathedral. Fr. Simeon was surprised and did not seem interested in speaking with Fr. Peter.”[lxxiv]

I’m sorry, but did I miss something? Did Metropolitan Jonah tell Fr. Peter to bring military recruitment paperwork and force Fr. Simeon into the military? Or did he, knowing that Fr. Simeon had been “exonerated” from all criminal charges and was diligently sobering up, think it might be a good idea for the two of them to simply sit down and talk about options?

Is this truly grounds for demanding Metropolitan Jonah’s resignation?

- “Finally, the Metropolitan attempted to transfer the priest to other Orthodox jurisdictions, and ultimately did permit him to transfer to another jurisdiction, in each case telling those jurisdictions there were no canonical impediments to a transfer.”

Were there canonical impediments to a transfer? And what, if any, might those be? There were no criminal charges against him. It has already been discussed earlier that he had a clean criminal record.

- “We have started an investigation into the rape allegation, and cannot assume whether the allegation is true or not. We only know that earlier allegations of misconduct by this priest were handled by Metropolitan Jonah in a manner at a complete variance with the required standards of our Church.”

This is an outright, egregious distortion of the facts, as I have hopefully outlined clearly in the Father Simeon section earlier.

- “Moral, canonical and inter-Orthodox relations issues aside, in light of the recent widely-publicized criminal cases involving sexual abuse at Penn State and in the Philadelphia Archdiocese and the Kansas City Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, the extent of the risk of liability to which the Metropolitan has exposed the church cannot be overstated.”

Yes, it can be overstated, and they did just that.

Coach Jerry Sandusky was indicted in 2011 on 52 counts of child molestation dating from 1994 to 2009.

To compare Metropolitan Jonah’s handling of these three cases of the “sexual misconduct” of others, to the Penn State scandal—and to cast Metropolitan Jonah in even the same light as the coaches and administration who covered up child abuse for years--this comparison the Synod presented to the world

and international media is shameful! Shame on you, bishops of the Synod!

- “Leading up to this most recent problem, there has existed for several years now a repeated pattern by Metropolitan Jonah of taking other unilateral actions that were contrary to the advice of the Holy Synod and/or the Church’s lawyers, which prolonged or caused litigation involving the OCA, which substantially increased legal fees, which created confusion in negotiations, and which exposed the OCA to otherwise avoidable additional financial and legal liability. He withheld information from his brother bishops and from the Church’s lawyers concerning litigation matters, and matters which might have resulted, and still might result, in litigation. He has spoken unilaterally with and provided sensitive information to opposing counsel and opposing parties concerning pending and threatened litigation, although he had been specifically warned many times of the perils of doing so.”

Is this statement just another willful distortion and exaggeration of the facts?

Due to the “confidentiality” of these “litigation matters”, we are not given any evidence of this and are supposed to take the Synod’s word. I can’t do that based on their distortion of the basic facts that I do know. Any of these claims could be based on something that might have happened one time, was pointed out to the Metropolitan, and was corrected in the future. Metropolitan Jonah went from Abbot to Metropolitan without proper training. Instead of working with him intensively on training to correct the manner in which he administered the Church, the Synod called him insane and sent him to a psychiatric medical facility.

It is very evident that Metropolitan Jonah tried to apply his peace-making, conciliatory nature (which abhors conflict) to all problems, believing that he could be of assistance in bringing both sides together.

Metropolitan Jonah wrote regarding these allegations when SMPAC raised them:

Never have I intended to deceive or mislead anyone about anything.

I believe that. I don’t think he was grounded in a foundational knowledge of the legal ramifications of trying to investigate matters on his own, or trying to bring two sides (church and victim) together.

Metropolitan Jonah also said he never intended to “create confusion” (as the Synod wrote in their statement):

Undoubtedly I have omitted pieces of stories, which may not have come to mind, given the context of a particular conversation. But neither have I always been given a full picture of what is going on. Had I been asked about a missing piece, I would of course have given it. I believe this is simply part of normal human behavior, and without malice.

- “He gave to unauthorized persons a highly sensitive, painstakingly detailed internal Synodal report concerning numerous investigations into sexual misconduct, risking leaks of names of alleged victims and alleged perpetrators. While those who now possess the report are wrongfully in possession of OCA property, they have not yet returned their copies of these highly confidential and sensitive documents, further exposing our Church to potential legal

liabilities.”

After the OCA announced Metropolitan Jonah’s forced resignation, there was outcry from around the world. The anti-Metropolitan Jonah SIC Report and SMPAC Memorandum were leaked to the Pokrov website following that outcry and prior to this statement. Metropolitan Jonah did not leak those documents. Someone from the Synod and/or the Metropolitan Council did. Curiously, Metropolitan Jonah’s statements defending himself and presenting his side of the story were not leaked. Even more curious, indeed, was the lack of any announcement by Syosset for an investigation into those leaks of highly confidential Church documents to the press.

In this statement is the Synod referring to Fr. Gregory Jensen, the consultant appointed by Metropolitan Jonah to assist him in wading through the mess since he may not have trusted the SMPAC after all that had transpired? Is it not to be expected that he should give your damning reports to trusted counselors?

As Metropolitan Jonah asked in his SMPAC response:

Is it not my role and prerogative as Metropolitan to weigh the advice and information given to me, to be able to express and work out my opinions with the Synod, or with other advisors, and make a decision based on that?

- “We continue to pray for Metropolitan Jonah’s spiritual needs even as his brother bishops have provided for his immediate material needs. He has no Church assignment obligations, allowing him to focus on himself and his family. Meanwhile, he is drawing full salary and benefits until at least October, when the Holy Synod next meets.”

It has been two full months since the publication and dissemination of this letter.

And so what is to happen to our Metropolitan Jonah, who has been accused of no grievous wrongdoing, no crimes, and whose only offense was that he didn’t do things Syosset's way?

Please, Synod, I beg of you... Be kind in your assignment of Metropolitan Jonah, and please send him swiftly to his new home, so as not to make a mockery of your power over him and to further erode his credibility and his standing within the church worldwide.

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**IT IS MEET AND RIGHT TO GIVE THANKS!**

Where was the obligatory “thank you for your service” to Metropolitan Jonah in the Synod’s statement?

Was he thanked even once?

Would it have been so difficult to say, “Thank you for offering your entire life to the Church and for the past four years of your service as Metropolitan. We didn’t see eye-to-eye on everything, but we wish you well”? Neither the press release issued by the OCA upon his resignation nor the following synodal

statement included a single acknowledgement of Metropolitan Jonah. Even Metropolitan Herman, who nearly brought the OCA to ruin from his financial mishandling, was treated better than this.

Was he offered the slightest recognition of anything he has done for the sake of the Church that he loves so much? Some of his actions will have historical significance for ages to come. His travels, his sermons, the inspiration he gave to others, the unification of churches and parishes... Could the Synod have even spent one single sentence in their statement acknowledging the wonderful things he has done in service for our Church?

No wonder why Metropolitan Jonah finally acquiesced to the request that he retire. He endured four years of this twisting of facts into distortions and misunderstanding of his mission. I am just now able to witness by reading this slanderous letter the full extent of what he endured.

Mainstream media has printed, without independent analysis as if the Synod's word should be assumed to be true, the story that Metropolitan Jonah covered up and protected a "rapist priest".

This is evil. And nothing has been done to stop such slander.

If the destruction of Metropolitan Jonah's reputation and his legacy wasn't enough, one of his "brother bishops" has allowed for the moral destruction of the monastery he founded.

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**WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?**

I have spent hours raging, weeping, and praying over the sorrowful state of affairs in the OCA. Some have said that the forced removal of Metropolitan Jonah is just part of church politics. Others have advised me to stay humble, to not question the hierarchy, and that God will sort it all out in the end.

God will indeed sort it all out. He will also call me to accountability. He will ask me how I responded when faced with the lies spoken to the world about my spiritual father and how I acted to rectify the injustice done to His servant. I can only pray He will understand my intent in writing this letter, and will be merciful to me.

I have believed in Fr. Jonah from the first day I met him many years ago.

I have believed in him throughout the past four years as he has served the Church as Metropolitan.

And I still believe in him.