



*O heavenly king,
consoler, spirit of
truth, everywhere
present and filling
all things: Treasury
of blessings and
giver of life: Come,
dwell within us and
cleanse us of every
stain, and save our
souls, O good one!*

Our Mission

Our vocation as Eastern Orthodox monastics, united in interactive communities of monks, nuns, and married couples, is to grow in the likeness of Christ through a vowed life and to embody and express Christ's love and message for all seekers in a manner responsive to contemporary needs and faithful to the prophetic spirit of the earliest Christian communities.

16th All-American Council October 31-November 4, 2011

The **Orthodox Church in America (OCA)** traces its origins to the arrival in Kodiak, Alaska of eight Orthodox missionaries from the Valamo Monastery in the northern Karelia Finnish region of Russia in 1794.

Since that time, the OCA has evolved and today includes parishes of the former **Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of North America (or Metropolia)**, as well as the **Romanian Orthodox Episcopate**, the **Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese**, and the **Bulgarian Orthodox Diocese**.

Today, the OCA is made up of roughly 700 parishes, missions, communities, monasteries, and institutions throughout the United States, Canada, and Mexico. **New Skete Communities is blessed to be part of the OCA.**

An important facet of the OCA is a gathering every three years called the **All-American Council (AAC)**. According to the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, **"the highest legislative and**

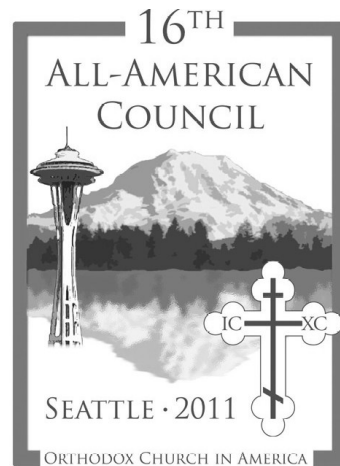
administrative authority within the Church is the All-American Council." (Art. III, Sec. 1).

The upcoming AAC is scheduled for October 31-November 4, 2011 in Seattle, Washington. During these four days, delegates from the OCA gather to make

issues as they relate to the OCA's Strategic Plan. Throughout the course of each day, as it is our life's work, those in attendance will formally join together in prayer during liturgical services. Informally, we listen to each other and make important decisions during these days.

It will be a time of sharing, forgiveness, unity, and honesty. The very act of gathering together every three years is an essential characteristic of what it means to be the church: the body of believers gathered together to proclaim the Gospel through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As we gather together in council, we seriously consider our unique legacy, which has been entrusted to us by our predecessors-the bishops, priests, and faithful men and women who brought the Orthodox faith to North America. We remember the sacrifices and efforts of those who built our churches, monasteries, and seminaries to keep Orthodox Christianity vibrant and alive for future generations in the New World. We ⇨



decisions that will guide all aspects of the Church and directly affect the future of the OCA. It is during this time that the **Metropolitan**, the first Bishop among his equals, is also elected when there is a vacancy.

This year's delegates will focus heavily on the future by working and voting on

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remember the inspired bishops, teachers and missionaries who articulated a theological and pastoral vision of Orthodoxy. *We rise to the task of shining the Lord's light for the whole world to see.*

The All-American Council consists of:

- The Metropolitan and all bishops of the Church;
- The priests of each parish and an equal number of lay delegates;
- Priests not having parishes if accredited by the Metropolitan Council;
- One lay delegate from each parish not having a priest;
- The members and the alternate members of the Metropolitan Council;
- The members of the Auditing Committee of the Church;
- Two delegates from each theological seminary;
- Members of the Pre-Conciliar Commission; and
- One representative of each Church organization (e.g. monasteries) officially accredited by the Holy Synod.

Additional persons may be invited by the *Pre-Conciliar Commission* with the approval of the Metropolitan, without the right to vote. Members of preparatory committees may also be invited to attend and participate in the discussions of the subject upon which their committees report to the All-American Council. All lay members of the All-American Council shall have the same qualifications for membership as the parish delegates (Cf. Article III, Section 6).

It's both an honor and responsibility to be a delegate representing their parish or institution. Representing New Skete Communities are *Brother Luke Dorr (Prior), Sister Cecelia Harvey (Prioress), Brother Christopher Savage (Priest-monk), and Sister Rebecca Cown.*

Once a vote has been taken by the Council on appropriate matters and approved by the bishops, it represents the "mind of the Church"—and delegates become the spokespersons for the OCA to bear witness to the conciliar decision-making process. Each delegate has the responsibility to share what they have seen, heard, and done as well as to make sure their decisions are understood and implemented by New Skete Communities.

Please keep our delegates and our church in your prayers as the All-American Council approaches.
May God bless you!



The 15th All-American Council in 2008

Together we pray...

"O Lord our God, look down upon all of us, and upon all who are preparing for the All-American Council. Grant us wisdom and understanding that we may learn Your holy will; warm our hearts with love for You and for our neighbors; guide us on the way of truth and righteousness; keep our hearts from all evil; unite us in one mind and in one heart, and let mutual brotherly love abide in our midst; bless us for the doing of good and useful things. Grant us peace and serenity, unity of spirit, concord and fruitful action, and all those things needful for our temporal and eternal life. For You are our God, powerful in mercy and gracious in strength, and to You are due all glory, honor, and worship: to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen."

~Prayer in Preparation for the All-American Council



May 1970, On behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Pimen, presented the Tomos or decree of independent self-government to the head of the OCA delegation, Bishop Theodosius of Sitka, Alaska. He was subsequently elected Metropolitan, and in 1979 received New Skete into the Orthodox Church in America.