

The Rectory of Saints Cyril and Methodius Orthodox Church

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May 11, 2015

Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius

TO ALL MEMBERS OF SAINTS CYRIL AND METHODIUS ORTHODOX CHURCH

Dear Beloved,

Christ is risen!

Greetings on the occasion of our patronal feast day.

Today, with the concurrence of our Parish Council, I wish to share with you once again a letter that I wrote to the parish eleven years ago, in January 2004. That letter (entitled "On Making our Parish a Safe and Nurturing Place") is about the very important desire and commitment that our parish be a safe and nurturing place, especially for our youngest members.

Please find a copy of my letter from 2004 attached. Please read it and, please, let us try to apply the things expressed in that letter to our day-to-day parish life so that our parish will always be a safe and nurturing place for all.

To answer a question before it is asked: This letter is NOT occasioned by anything unfortunate that has occurred in our parish. Rather, it is in response to a continuing initiative of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America to address this important issue in a proactive manner. We thank our bishops for being so concerned about making sure that the parishes and institutions of the Orthodox Church in America are safe and nurturing places, especially for our most vulnerable members.

If you have questions or concerns in regard to this matter, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

With prayerful best wishes,

In Christ,



Archpriest John Hopko, Pastor
Saints Cyril and Methodius Church
Terryville, CT

Brothers & Sisters!
This matter is so very
important. Let's take it
seriously and do our
very best!
With love in Christ,
Fr. John

Attachment (1): "On Making our Parish a Safe and Nurturing Place"

**Notes from Fr. John:
On Making our Parish a Safe and Nurturing Place**

January 2004

Dearly Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

All of us, I am sure, want our parish to be a safe and nurturing place where all of us can come together in order to know, express and share the love of God and one another. We especially, of course, wish and hope that the younger members of our parish, right down to the youngest child, experience our parish in this way: as the presence and knowledge of Love, for God is Love.

Thankfully, our parish has historically been a good and safe place. However, given the present climate in the world, it is important that we now take concrete steps to make our parish an even safer and more secure place. We are being strongly encouraged to take such steps, and even are being given directives and guidelines about how to do so, by the bishops of our Church, the Orthodox Church in America.

However, as our parish council during the coming year discusses these matters and reviews the directives and other materials forwarded to us by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America regarding these issues, there are some things that we can already begin doing in our parish, right now, to ensure the safety and well-being of all its members, from the eldest to the youngest.

1) First and foremost, we ask that parents and legal guardians take the following simple step to ensure and defend the safety of their children: *Please accompany your child wherever he or she goes in the church building, the other buildings of the parish and on the parish grounds.*

For example, please do not allow your child to be unsupervised if he or she needs to use the restroom during the course of a church service. A parent should accompany the child who needs to use the restroom to and from the restroom. There should never be a situation where the responsible parent or guardian is upstairs in the nave of the Church and the child is downstairs alone, unsupervised.

Also, if, during the Coffee Hour after the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning, a child wants to play outside on the grounds, then a parent should make him or herself available to supervise.

2) Secondly and very, very importantly, *we remind all adult members of the parish that they are never, under any circumstances, to be alone with a young member of our parish.* There is never an occasion when this rule should be broken. There should always be two or more adults present wherever a child or children are present. This simple rule is a very powerful means of ensuring that nothing problematic will ever occur regarding a child in our parish.

3) Third, while there are traditional means of greeting one another in our Church and society, *we must all make sure that we are keeping our hands and other parts of our bodies to ourselves.* While we ourselves may be comfortable in certain physical forms of expression, those same forms of expression may make others uncomfortable or even upset. It is possible to be warm and loving with one another in ways that do not lend themselves to misinterpretation. Let's use those ways.

4) Fourth, we must remember that *when we announce and greet guests in a public manner at the end of the services we do so in order to allow all of us to know that someone new is among us.* We welcome guests and are extremely pleased when we have visitors. We pray and hope that some of these guests and visitors will soon become members of our parish family. However, for the safety of all involved, it is also important for us to know when someone unfamiliar is among us.

3) Fifth and finally, *please be informed that no inappropriate behavior will be tolerated, not even in the smallest way.* We as a parish and myself as its father and pastor are absolutely and, without fail, completely committed to the health and safety of every member of our parish-especially the smallest and weakest among us. Let's all do our part.

If anyone has any concerns in regard to the matters addressed in these notes, please contact me immediately.

Your servant in Christ,

Fr. John Hopko