

**Statement of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America
on Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs Regarding Marriage**

Sincerely Held Religious Belief Statement

Adopted by St. Anne Orthodox Church (OCA)
Oak Ridge, Tennessee
With appended paragraph

August 21, 2016: Parish Council Minutes



Statement of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America on Sincerely Held Religious Beliefs Regarding Marriage

The following statement was approved by the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America during a session of the Holy Synod on June 16, 2016 at Dormition of the Mother of God Monastery in Rives Junction, MI. It is approved for posting and use by all dioceses, parishes, institutions and monasteries of the Orthodox Church in America.

General Standard

The Orthodox Church in America teaches and maintains as a sincerely held religious belief that God has established marriage as a lifelong, exclusive relationship between one man and one woman, and that all intimate sexual activity outside the marriage relationship, whether heterosexual, homosexual, or otherwise, is immoral, and therefore sin (Genesis 2:24-25; Exodus 20:14, 17, 22:19; Leviticus 18:22-23, 20:13, 15-16; Matthew 19:4-6, 9; Romans 1:18-31; I Corinthians 6:9-10, 15-20; I Timothy 1:8-11; Jude 7). This principle undergirds the teaching of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America that Marriage is the most perfect realization of love between a man and a woman in which two become one and in which love unites in such a way that two lives become one life in perfect harmony. We believe that God created the human race male and female and that all conduct with the intent to adopt a gender other than one's birth gender is immoral and therefore sin (Genesis 1:27; Deuteronomy 22:5). Marriage can only be between two people whose birth sex is male and female. The Orthodox Church's marriage service specifically states, "Establish them in the holy union which is from Thee. For in the beginning Thou didst make them male and female, and by Thee the woman is joined unto the man as a helper and for the procreation of the human race." Again the service states explicitly, "For by Thee is the husband joined unto the wife. Unite them in one mind; wed them into one flesh, granting to them of the fruit of the body, and the procreation of fair children."

The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America upholds and reaffirms such statements such as the July 2, 2013 *Synodal Affirmation of Marriage* (<http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/holy-synod/synodal-affirmation-of-the-mystery-of-marriage>); the July, 1992 Synodal Affirmations on Marriage, Family Life, Sexuality, and the Sanctity of Life (<http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/holy-synod/synodal-affirmations-on-marriage-family-sexuality-and-the-sanctity-of-life>); and other such statements and pastoral letters including the June 28, 2015 Statement on US Supreme Court Decision by His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon

<http://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/his-beatitude-metropolitan-tikhon/statement-concerning-june-26-us-supreme-court-decision>).

Facilities Use

The Orthodox Church in America teaches and maintains as a sincerely held religious belief “that the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world and those who dwell therein.” (Psalm 24:1). The Church rejects the notion that there is a division between the material and spiritual world and that the two are somehow subject to separate and distinct moral and religious standards. It is for this reason that the resources of the Church – its property, its financial assets, and all that belongs to it of a material nature – may be used only for purposes and in ways consistent with the Church’s sincerely held religious beliefs and doctrines as reflected in Holy Scripture, the Tradition of the Church, the Holy Canons of the Church, and the encyclicals of our Holy Synod defining our faith, morals, and doctrines. The facilities of the Church may, in the sole discretion of the Church, be made available for use by other parties for activities consistent with the sincerely held religious beliefs of the Church and upon terms and conditions established by the Parish Council under guidelines approved by the diocesan bishop. Under no circumstances will such activities include those contrary to and incompatible with the sincerely held religious beliefs of the Church, including, but not limited to, events, services or receptions related to non-Orthodox sacraments (including weddings between persons of the same sex and related receptions), non-Orthodox worship services, and partisan political activities.

The following is an example of a statement that will be adopted by each diocese, parish, institution and monastery of the Orthodox Church in America. The Diocesan Hierarch can adjust the statement in conjunction with the considered needs and circumstances.

The *(Name of the Parish/Hall/Facility)* is the property of the *(Name of the Parish/Institution/Monastery)*, a non-profit church organization located in *(Location)*. Due to sincerely held religious beliefs, documented in the Biblical, dogmatic and canonical documents of the Orthodox Church, we do not permit the *(Name of the Parish/Hall/Facility)* to be used for the following purposes: events, services or receptions related to non-Orthodox sacraments (including, but not limited to, baptisms, weddings or funerals); non-Orthodox worship services; and partisan political or social rallies."

Sincerely Held Religious Belief:

Statement Adopted Regarding Facilities Use

by St. Anne Orthodox Church (Oak Ridge, TN) Parish Council

August 21, 2016

“The St. Anne Orthodox Church /Hall/Facility is the property of the St. Anne Orthodox Church, a non-profit church organization located in Oak Ridge, TN. Due to sincerely held religious beliefs, documented in the Biblical, dogmatic and canonical documents of the Orthodox Church, we do not permit the St. Anne Orthodox Church /Hall/Facility to be used for the following purposes: events, services or receptions related to non-Orthodox sacraments (including, but not limited to, baptisms, weddings or funerals); non-Orthodox worship services; and partisan political or social rallies.”

In: Minutes of the St. Anne Parish Council, August 21, 2016. See appended.

**Saint Anne Orthodox Church
560 Oak Ridge Turnpike
Oak Ridge, TN 37830-7164**

**Parish Council Meeting Minutes
August 21, 2016**

Present:	Fr. Stephen Freeman, Rector Mary Ann Favazza Ben Prothro David Heise (Treasurer)	Adrienne Pyle Carl Bruner Beth Freeman (Clerk)
Absent:	Marcus Richey John Dolynchuk	Adam Davis

A quorum being present, the Parish Council meeting commenced at 12:30 p.m. with prayer.

Minutes

The minutes of the July 24, 2016 meeting were approved as amended.

Treasurer's Report

The net income for the month of July was \$516.66, and the net income for the year to date was \$2685.53. The Treasurer's Report, which required some corrections, was to be approved at the September Council meeting.

Rector's Report

Fr. Stephen reported on the Diocesan Assembly, held in Wilmington, NC in late July. Bishop Alexander addressed the Assembly concerning his vision for the diocese. A new summary of the "Deposits and Managed Debt Program" (DMDP) was presented at the Assembly, and copies of this summary were distributed to the Parish Council.

Fr. Stephen reported that the Holy Synod has released a document defining a "Sincerely Held Religious Belief" (SHRB) on the topic of the use of church facilities. The document asserts that the OCA does not recognize a division between the teaching of the church and the use of its resources, buildings, properties, or material assets. These resources, etc., are to be used in accordance with our sincerely held religious beliefs. The language of the SHRB document was drafted and passed by the national church and the Holy Synod. A motion was made and seconded that St. Anne's adopt this SHRB definition as one of our parish documents.

"The St. Anne Orthodox Church /Hall/Facility is the property of the St. Anne Orthodox Church, a non-profit church organization located in Oak Ridge, TN. Due to sincerely held religious beliefs, documented in the Biblical, dogmatic and canonical documents of the Orthodox Church, we do not permit the St. Anne Orthodox Church /Hall/Facility to be used for the following purposes: events, services or receptions related to non-Orthodox sacraments (including, but not

limited to, baptisms, weddings or funerals); non-Orthodox worship services; and partisan political or social rallies."

The motion passed unanimously. (See complete document).

Fr. Stephen will be attending the consecration of the new church building of St. Cyprian of Carthage, in Richmond, VA, on Aug. 26-27.

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 p.m. with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Mat. Beth Freeman, Clerk