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Meadville-Lombard Theological School

Chicago Center for Cultural Connections

Community Renewal Society



September 7, 2010

CRLMC STATEMENT OF CONCERN

REGARDING ST. NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH NEW YORK CITY

Buried in the midst of the conflict and publicity surrounding the building of an Islamic Center and Mosque in the vicinity of "Ground Zero" is another troubling and unresolved situation.

Few people may be aware that covered in the rubble of Ground Zero was an historic church. St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church was the only religious structure destroyed in the attacks of September 11, 2001.

St. Nicholas Church was founded in 1916 by Greek immigrants. It became a sanctuary for many people and was often called "the sailor's church" in reference to its ministry among the numerous sailors who for decades found a church home within its eloquently decorated walls.

In the aftermath of 9/11, St. Nicholas was promised that it would be permitted to rebuild on or near its original location. Years now have passed. As of this date, no permission has been granted to this historic congregation to rebuild their sanctuary.

The issues surrounding this troubling delay are admittedly complex and at times obscure. Delay after delay has characterized attempts to rebuild on the entire Ground Zero site.

The rebuilding of St Nicholas may seem far removed from the concerns of the religious leaders of Chicago, but it is very much in the hearts and minds of Greek Orthodox faithful across the country, and especially those who are waiting patiently to rebuild their church. We respectfully urge all parties involved to meet, resolve the issues and differences and rebuild this sacred place.

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About the Council of Religious Leaders

The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago (CRLMC) was founded 25 years ago, at a time when racial tensions and social injustices were on the rise, and a group of religious leaders in Chicago recognized the growing need to understand cultural and religious differences and learn how to work together. To the best of our knowledge, CRLMC is unique as a continuing inter-religious organization in the nation and likely in the world. By uniting the churches, synagogues, temples, mosques, and other religious assemblies, CRLMC seeks to present a unified vision and voice on issues affecting the common good of the people of Chicago.

For Further Information Contact Co-Directors: Rev. Paul Rutgers 312-431-3236;
Rev. Stanley Davis 312-504-3582. Website: www.crlmc.org