

Elpidophoros Lambriniadis becomes head of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Succeeding Demetrios Trakatellis, he is the first new US Greek Orthodox leader in two decades.

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Elpidophoros Lambriniadis (left), Photo courtesy of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. Demetrios Trakatellis, Photo by Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs via Creative Commons license.

Elpidophoros Lambriniadis was enthroned as archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America on June 22 at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New York City.

The 51-year-old archbishop was the first new US Greek Orthodox leader in two decades, the Associated Press reported. He succeeds Demetrios Trakatellis, who served in the role from 1999 until his retirement in May at age 91. A synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople then elected Elpidophoros unanimously, according to a press release from the Greek Orthodox.

Elpidophoros was born in Istanbul and studied theology in Greece, Germany, and Lebanon. Since 2011 he has been metropolitan of Bursa, Turkey, which has 1.85 million inhabitants. The Greek Orthodox in America, headquartered in New York City, includes 540 congregations in nine districts: Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Denver,

Detroit, New Jersey, New York, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco. It has 440,000 active members, according to an analysis of different ways of counting membership done by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research.

Elpidophoros has held numerous leadership roles in ecumenical relations, such as being a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches since 1996. At the Joint International Commission for the Theological Dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Lutheran World Federation, he was the secretary for the Orthodox.

Elpidophoros taught for a semester in Boston at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, which was the longest visit he has made to the United States, AP reported.

He told the AP that his top priority is completing the St. Nicholas shrine in New York City adjacent to the memorial plaza at the former site of the World Trade Center, replacing St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church which was destroyed on September 11, 2001. The construction of the shrine was controversial for his predecessor, Demetrios, as costs rose to an estimated \$80 million. The archdiocese has struggled financially in recent years but announced in October that it was now fiscally stable.

Elpidophoros told a gathering of clergy in the denomination that among his top concerns are their health care and pensions, the AP reported.

“I give you my word that together, we will handle the earthly concerns—the health care, financial security, retirement, and all the others that rob you of a good night’s sleep—and we will handle them in a way that is transparent and responsible to you,” he said.

A version of this article appears in the print edition under the title “People: Elpidophoros Lambriniadis and Demetrios Trakatellis.”