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## **Press Releases**

### **PORT AUTHORITY AND GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE ANNOUNCE AGREEMENT ON REBUILDING OF ST. NICHOLAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**Date: Oct 14, 2011**

**Press Release Number: 122**

#### **Church Was Destroyed on September 11, 2001**

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America today announced an agreement regarding the rebuilding of St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, which was destroyed in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

The agreement, signed today by Port Authority Executive Director Chris Ward and representatives of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and St. Nicholas Parish, permits the rebuilding of the Church with a nondenominational bereavement center at the east end of Liberty Park, at 130 Liberty Street. The agreement follows a four-month independent engineering study commissioned by the Port Authority and the Archdiocese, which found that the Church could be built on the site with minor modifications to the original plan and with no impact on the World Trade Center construction schedule.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo said, "We lost St. Nicholas Church in the destruction of September 11 and for too long its future has been uncertain. Rebuilding St. Nicholas Church, with a nondenominational bereavement center, is not just good news for the Greek Orthodox community, but for all New Yorkers. With this agreement, we are continuing New York's collective healing, restoration, and resurgence. Now we are finally returning this treasured place of reflection to where it belongs."

Archbishop Demetrios said, "We are grateful to our esteemed Governor and precious friend Andrew Cuomo for bringing to reality the dream we have nourished for ten long years. St. Nicholas Church, rising again with the help of God at Ground Zero - where it stood spiritually important for 85 years, is an affirmation of the significance of religious freedom and experience for all New Yorkers and all Americans. The covenant stands firm. We will again light many candles in the new St. Nicholas Church and remember those who were lost to us, and those heroes who so nobly sacrificed their lives. Our pledge is to be a witness for all New Yorkers, that freedom of conscience and the fundamental human right of free religious expression will always shine forth in the resurrected St. Nicholas Church."

Port Authority Executive Director Chris Ward said, "I am delighted that we were able to find a

way to rebuild the Church with no impact on the construction schedule at the World Trade Center. The Church is an important and appropriate addition to the site, and will serve New Yorkers of all faiths for generations to come.”

The original Church, located at 155 Cedar Street, was founded by Greek immigrants in 1916 and occupied a 1,200 square foot building. The new Church will be 4,100 square feet. The rebuilt Church will also house a nondenominational bereavement center and serve as a venue for interfaith dialogue. The siting of the Church will have no impact on the World Trade Center site construction schedule.

Negotiations between the Church and the Port Authority to rebuild St. Nicholas broke down in 2009 and resulted in litigation in 2011. As a result of settlement discussions mediated by the Governor’s office, the Port Authority and Archdiocese agreed to an independent engineering study to determine the feasibility of siting the Church at various locations in Liberty Park. The four-month study was led by Peter Lehrer, a nationally renowned construction expert, who worked on the project on a pro bono basis with Director of World Trade Center Construction Steven Plate and independent engineers Gorton & Partners and McNamara/Salvia, Inc. The study concluded that structural issues could be resolved to site the Church at 130 Liberty Street at significantly reduced cost compared to the original agreement and with no delay to construction at the World Trade Center site.

Under the agreement, the Port Authority will be responsible for below-ground infrastructure costs and the Archdiocese will be responsible for all costs related to the above-ground construction of the Church. The Church is agreeing to swap its 155 Cedar Street land for the rights to the Liberty Street parcel. Under the agreement, there will be no payments made by the Port Authority to the Church. The agreement announced today will result in termination of the litigation upon approval of the Port Authority board.

Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos said, “Today is a very historic day for the members of the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and the entire Greek American community. As the grandson of Greek immigrants, I have worked for years to ensure that this church was rebuilt, and thanks to Archbishop Demetrios, Governor Cuomo, Mayor Bloomberg and countless others, we have finally achieved that reality. Rebuilding St. Nicholas Church at Ground Zero will stand as a strong and hopeful symbol to the world of the revitalization of New York and a fitting reminder of the spiritual journey we have taken together since 9/11.”

Joe Daniels, President and CEO of the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, said, “Rebuilding St. Nicholas Church is an important part of reclaiming what we lost on September 11, 2001. The Church will serve as a place of remembrance and unity. I thank Governor Cuomo for his leadership in this process and for making sure that the Church has a beautiful new home that will serve all New Yorkers.”

Anthoula Katsimatides, who lost her brother John Katsimatides on 9/11 and is a Board Member of the 9/11 Memorial and Museum, said, “My brother John used to visit St. Nicholas Church and found it to be a place of comfort and reflection. I hope that with the church’s return, it will serve as a place of spiritual solace to people of all faiths who come to pay tribute at the 9/11 Memorial.

I thank Governor Cuomo for his work to ensure that this matter has been resolved.”

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*The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which is self-sufficient and does not receive tax dollars from either state, operates many of the busiest and most important transportation links in the region. They include John F. Kennedy International, Newark Liberty International, LaGuardia, Stewart International and Teterboro airports; AirTrain JFK and AirTrain Newark; the George Washington Bridge and Bus Station; the Lincoln and Holland tunnels; the three bridges between Staten Island and New Jersey; the PATH (Port Authority Trans-Hudson) rapid-transit system; Port Newark; the Elizabeth-Port Authority Marine Terminal; the Howland Hook Marine Terminal on Staten Island; the Brooklyn Piers/Red Hook Container Terminal; the Port Authority-Port Jersey Marine Terminal and the Port Authority Bus Terminal in midtown Manhattan. The agency also owns the 16-acre World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan.*