President of Billy Graham Evangelistic Association Franklin Graham visits Russia



From July 26 to 29, 2021, president of Billy Graham Evangelistic Association Franklin Graham was on a working visit to Russia.

On July 26, Franklin Graham was received by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, at the parish house of the church of Our Lady the Joy to All the Afflicted-in-Bolshaya-Ordynka. The sides exchanged opinions concerning prospects for the development of cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. They discussed in particular joint projects for protecting persecuted Christians.

On the following day, Franklin Graham met with the Council of Federation vice-speaker K. I. Kosachev at the Council of the Federation. In his talk with Mr. Kosachev, Franklin Graham spoke out for the improvement of relations between Moscow and Washington. In his turn, K. I. Kosachev invited Franklin

Graham to attend the World Inter-Cultural and Interreligious Dialogue Conference to take place in May 2022 in Sankt-Petersburg.

On July 28, Franklin Graham visited the State Duma of the Russian Federation to meet with its chairman V.V. Volodin. They exchanged opinions about the state of Russian-American relations and the situation developed due to the coronavirus pandemic. They also touched upon the topic of commitment to traditional family values and the situation concerning the ECHR's demand that the Russian Federation should legitimize 'same-sex unions'. Franklin Graham welcomed the firm attitude of the Russian state to this matter, noting that the Evangelistic Association upholds traditional Christian values in matters of morals.

In the evening of July 29, an official reception took place at Four Seasons Hotel in Moscow, organized by the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and devoted to the Day of the Baptism of Russia and to Franklin Graham's coming to Moscow. Present at the reception were political and religious leaders in Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church was represented by Archimandrite Philaret (Bulekov), DECR vice-chairman, Hieromonk Stephan (Igumnov, DECR secretary for inter-Christian Relations, and Hierodeacon Peter (Akhmatkhanov), and Mr. Philipp Champion.

In his address to those present, Franklin Graham called to normalize relations between Russia and the USA, pointing out in particular to the peace-making role of Christian confessions. In conclusion of his speech, he expressed gratitude to President Vladimir Putin for saving Christianity in Syria. 'If it had not been for Russia's interference in the situation in Syria, I think not a single Christian church would have remained there, so I am grateful to the Russian president for his decision', the president of Billy Graham Evangelistic Association stressed.

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Franklin Graham, a son of the world-known preacher, has headed Billy Graham Evangelistic Association founded by his father since 1996. Since 1978 he has also been the leader of the Samaritan's Purse charity.

During his meetings with Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia in 2012 and 2019 in Moscow, Franklin Graham repeatedly stressed the friendly relations between Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the Russian Orthodox Church based on commitment to traditional Christian values.

In 2015, the Russian Orthodox Church together with Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and the Samaritan's Purse charity implemented a major project for humanitarian aid to people who were affected by the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine and were at that moment in the territory of the Rostov

and Belgorod regions of the Russian Federation. The refugees received 63 420 humanitarian kits which included articles of prime necessities, foodstuffs and children gifts.

In 2017, the Moscow Patriarchate sent a delegation to the World Summit in Defense of Persecuted Christians organized by the Evangelistic Association in Washington and called to draw the attention of the world community to the unprecedented persecutions against Christianity. The idea to organize this summit was born during Franklin Graham's conversation with Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, in autumn 2015 in Moscow.

DECR Communication Service

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