

'Putin's Confessor' Metropolitan Shevkunov Hails Charlie Kirk as a 'Martyr'

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Metropolitan Tikhon Shevkunov. **Sergei Malgavko / TASS**

A senior Russian Orthodox Church bishop often described President Vladimir Putin's spiritual adviser has [praised](#) the late American conservative Charlie Kirk as a "martyr," saying his death could inspire Russian missionaries.

Metropolitan Tikhon Shevkunov, writing on the Orthodox website pravoslavie.ru, called Kirk's killing "his greatest sermon and the pinnacle of his mission." He lauded Kirk's Christian faith and conservative principles, values the Kremlin has increasingly embraced as a counter to Western liberalism.

"In the hearts of millions of allies and friends, Kirk's martyrdom breathed new, multiplied life into their cause and convictions," Shevkunov wrote, acknowledging that the American was a relative unknown in Russia before his death earlier this month.

Kirk, an ally of U.S. President Donald Trump who founded the conservative youth organization Turning Point USA, was shot dead while speaking at a university campus in Utah on Sept. 10.

Related article: [Makeshift Charlie Kirk and Iryna Zarutska Memorial Appears Outside U.S. Embassy in Moscow](#)

Shevkunov contrasted Kirk's "integrity and willingness to take young people seriously" with what he called the tendency of some Russian missionaries to mimic "Western-style gimmickry" in an effort to appeal to youth.

"It's not a secret that we still haven't rid ourselves of the chronic weakness of desiring to imitate the West, which in its extremes turns into something directly opposed to the Gospel," he wrote.

"Some Orthodox missionaries, driven without doubt by the best intentions, try to please everyone after watching Western modernist preachers," Shevkunov added. "They adapt to the tastes of young people, trading away their mission for crude jokes and playful 'missionary tricks.'"

Shevkunov's links to Putin have drawn scrutiny since the late 1990s, when the future president met him at a Moscow monastery frequented by Federal Security Service (FSB) agents.

He was filmed in 2023 accompanying Putin on a surprise visit to Crimea, marking the ninth anniversary of its annexation from Ukraine. He was [appointed](#) to head the Crimean diocese later that year.

The Kremlin has said the two men know each other well.

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