

MINUTES
MEETING OF THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF THE DIOCESE OF THE
MIDWEST
28 January 2009
Chicago, Illinois

I. OPENING

The regular meeting of the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of the Midwest was opened with prayer by His Eminence, Archbishop Job of Chicago and the Midwest at 10:16 a.m.

A. ROLL CALL

1. **Members Present in addition to Archbishop Job:** The V. Rev. John Adamcio, the V. Rev. Andrew Clements, Mrs. Alexa Geeza, the Rev. Mark Hodges Mr. Robert Koncel, treasurer, Mrs. Mary Jane Lucak, Ms. Kitty Mabus, the V. Rev. Michael Matsko, Mr John Sedor (alternate), the V. Rev. Basil Stoyka, and the V. Rev. John Zdinak, chancellor.
2. **Deans Present:** The Rev. Joseph Gibson, the V. Rev. Thomas Mueller, the V. Rev. Timothy Sawchak, the V. Rev. Paul Wesche, and the V. Rev. Andrew Yavornitzky.
3. **Others Present:** Mr. Joseph Kormos, Deacon Joseph Matusiak.

B. SCRIPTURE READINGS. The daily readings, James 3:11-4:6 and Mark 11:22-26, were read by Mrs. Mary Jane Lucak and Fr. Andrew Yavornitzky respectively.

II. ARCHBISHOP'S REPORT.

Archbishop Job reported on his ministry since the October 2008 Diocesan Assembly.

- A. He spoke about the All-American Council in November 2008, noting that he left the Council feeling energized – and relieved! He noted that the Enthronement of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Jonah, in December 2008, was very positive, and that the meeting of the Holy Synod was equally positive and that it was clear that the hierarchs have a renewed sense of working together.
- B. Four ordinations were celebrated.
- C. Twelve parishes were visited during this period.
- D. There are a number of parish vacancies, including Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral, Detroit, MI; Saints Peter and Paul Church, Burr Ridge, IL; and Holy Assumption Church, Canton, OH.
- E. There are currently 20 diocesan seminaries, equally divided between Saint Tikhon's Seminary and Saint Vladimir's Seminary. Each receives a scholarship of about \$700.00 per year.
- F. Finally, Archbishop Job spoke about the various legal disputes the Orthodox Church in America is facing.

III. CHANCELLOR'S REPORT.

Father John Zdinak highlighted the following in his report.

- A. Volunteers are being sought to work on the diocesan web site.
- B. Polly Walker will serve as diocesan auditor and will be reworking the accounting system.

C. Concerning membership, underreporting continues as permitting parishes to withhold assessment payments during the recent OCA crisis has “opened the door to parochialism.” Some parishes have reported significant losses in membership – one parish reported a 50% decrease in membership! -- while others are likely to remain in arrears with regard to assessment payments. This has a significant impact on the diocese’s income and, consequently, the diocese’s ability to expand, much less maintain, its ministry.

D. The Mission Endowment Fund was established with surplus funds realized after the sale of the old Diocesan Center in Hinsdale, IL. In 2008, the fund lost 30% of its value. As the missions grow stronger, less assistance has been required. Established parishes need assistance in their efforts to reverse membership decline. Parish health grants were distributed in 2008 to fund a variety of successful outreach ministries in established parishes. Father Zdinak recommended that the fund be renamed the “Diocesan/Parish Mission Development Fund,” with 10% of the fund available to the diocese when finances are tight, especially in light of the decrease in reported membership and, as a consequence, the reduction in assessment income.

After considerable discussion, Father Basil Stoyka motioned, seconded by Ms. Kitty Mabus, that *the Mission Endowment Fund should be renamed the “Parish Development and Missions Fund,” that the appropriate budget line item be retitled “Parish Development/Missions,” and that the corresponding committee be renamed the “Parish Development and Missions Committee.”* The motion passed unanimously. Father Thomas Mueller will chair the new committee.

IV. DEANERY REPORTS.

A. **Chicago Deanery.** In addition to his written report, Father Thomas Mueller noted that the property of the former Saint Clement of Ohrid Church, Merrillville, IN, sold for \$300,000.00. The Saint Clement faithful worship at the Protection of the Virgin Mary Church, also in Merrillville. The search for a new pastor for Saints Peter and Paul Church, Burr Ridge, IL, continues. A parish leadership and development workshop was held at Chicago’s Holy Trinity Cathedral, while a deanery-wide presentation on domestic violence will be held at Holy Resurrection Church, Palatine, IL, in February. A new mission, Saint Macarios, has been established in Chicago’s Hyde Park area in the immediate vicinity of the University of Chicago. The Rev. Elijah Mueller is overseeing organization efforts.

B, **Cleveland Deanery.** There were no additions to the written report submitted by the Very Rev. John Steffaro, who was absent from the meeting. Father Basil Stoyka, however, announced that two retreats, one for altar servers and the other for the general public, will be held in Broadview Heights and Lorain, OH, in the coming months.

C. **Columbus Deanery.** In addition to his written report, Father Joseph Gibson noted that the election of a new Metropolitan has had a positive effect on the deanery. He requested prayers for priests in the deanery having surgery and health problems. The deanery has three seminarians. A choir workshops will be held in the near future, with Prof. David Drillock as the featured speaker.

D. **Kansas City Deanery.** In addition to his written report, Father Timothy Sawchak noted that Archangels Michael and Gabriel Church, Omaha, NE, was broken into; with several liturgical items were stolen. The Very Rev. Thomas Succarotte had yet another

heart attack. The parish in Desloge, MO, remains vacant. The deanery is looking forward to hosting the Diocesan Assembly at the Doubletree Hotel, Overland Park, KS, October 5-7, 2009.

E. **Michigan Deanery.** In addition to his written report, Father Andrew Yavornitzky spoke of the alarming economic climate in the metro Detroit area. Detroit's Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral the parish is attempting to rebuild after several years of difficulties which left it \$600,000.00 in debt. Services are being celebrated by a Romanian priest, and a core group of faithful is making a serious effort to revive the parish. A new parish council has been elected, a positive attitude has prevailed, and efforts to reduce the parish's debt, including the sale of the former rectory, are being pursued.

F. **Minneapolis Deanery.** In addition to his written report, Father Paul Wesche spoke about his vision as the newly appointed dean and the reactions of the deanery clergy to the recent OCA scandal.

V. METROPOLITAN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT.

Father Michael Matsko reported that the members of the Metropolitan Council were encouraged greatly by Metropolitan Jonah's remarks at their first meeting with him during the All-American Council. It is yet to be seen what role the Metropolitan Council will play, but talk of vision and a strategic planning process were well received. Looming legal issues include a new \$41 million lawsuit by the former Bishop of Alaska, Nikolai. A discussion followed, which touched on the OCA budget, the perception that while the scandal may have ended the "culture of silence" continues, the ongoing lack of trust, and appropriate levels of funding for the Metropolitan's travel and that of the members of the Central Church Administration.

VI. PARISH HEALTH FACILITATOR'S REPORT.

Following lunch, Mr. Joseph Kormos opened a presentation/discussion on the Parish Health Ministry. He noted that the goal of the ministry was to connect parishes, share ideas, and stimulate growth, especially in lethargic parishes. This is being accomplished through the "Parish Pulse" e-zine, sent via e-mail to clergy, parish leaders, and any one else whose e-mail address he receives. [Circulation should be increased, so parishes should submit e-mail addresses of members who would benefit from "Parish Pulse."] It is also being accomplished through workshops and presentations at various parishes. [Eight parishes have hosted a workshop/presentation.] He also spoke about parish financial grants, used to fund growth and outreach programs in parishes that submitted grant applications, and the 2008 parish health summit held at Saint Joseph Church, Wheaton, IL, in the summer of 2008, at which a model for parish health and growth was developed.

Mr. Kormos continued by offering his ministry's assistance to parishes, but noted that he has not received any requests of late – although he has been called upon by Antiochian parishes. He spoke about a seminar for urban parishes, to be held in the summer of 2009, and the positive use of "webinars" – on-line seminars that offer training at a remarkably low cost.

With regard to the newly formed "Parish Development and Missions Committee" headed

by Father Thomas Mueller, Mr. Kormos stated that he is glad to be relieved of the responsibilities he had as chairman of the former committee, so that he can turn his attention to putting in place the specifics that allow missions to mature.

VII. TREASURER'S REPORT.

Mr. Robert Koncel reviewed the 2008 financial report and offered several clarifications and comments. He noted that while \$486,000.00 was anticipated in assessments for 2008, only \$420,423.09 was received. While \$29,643.68 was spent for the Parish Health Facilitator, \$52,000.00 has been budgeted for 2009. Of the anticipated \$551,600.00 anticipated income receipts for 2008, \$509,644.75 was received. With regard to escrowed parish assessment payments, \$202,310.00 – the total in escrow -- was released to the OCA before the end of 2008. He also reported that investments lost 30% of their value in 2008, in light of the nation's economic crisis.

With regard to the 2009 budget, Mr. Koncel noted that it falls short by \$23,384.75. However, funds reserved for "special visitors" and related matters, as indicated in the financial report, can be used to cover necessary expenses.

Mr. Koncel also noted that

- A. the stipend that Archbishop Job and other hierarchs on the Holy Synod had received from the OCA has been eliminated, and it is unlikely that it will be reinstated. This needs to be rolled back into the Archbishop's salary.
- B. the diocese's major financial problem is getting parishes to remit their assessment payments on time.
- C. given the fact that the diocesan car has 95,000 miles on it and that prices of new cars, given the current economy, are excellent, perhaps consideration could be given to the purchase of a replacement.

VIII. STRATEGIC PLANNING.

Father John Zdinak stated that with the impending retirement of Archbishop Job in 2011, strategic planning for the future is critical. The central question is "What should we be doing on the diocesan level?" He also spoke of the prospects of an "episcopal search."

IX. NEXT MEETING.

The next meeting of the Diocesan Council will be held on Thursday, May 14, 2009. The Diocese/Parish Missions Committee will meet on Tuesday, May 12, while the Bishop's Council will meet on Wednesday, May 13.

X. ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned with the singing of the Hymn to the Theotokos at 3:58 p.m. upon motion by Father Basil Stoyka, seconded by Mrs. Mary Jane Lucak.

Respectfully submitted January 28, 2009,

Mrs. Alexa Geeza, secretary for the meeting

in the absence of Father John Matusiak, secretary

Edited and formatted February 10, 2009 by Father John Matusiak

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