

MEETING OF THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF THE DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

Chicago, Illinois • 1 December 2015

I. OPENING

The meeting, convened at the Holiday Inn Midway, opened with the singing of “O Heavenly King,” led by His Grace, Bishop Paul, at 10:08 a.m.

II. ATTENDANCE.

Present were Bishop Paul; Archpriest John Zdinak, Chancellor; Robert Koncel, Treasurer; Archpriests James Dank, Alexander Garklavs, Emilian Hutnyan, and Alexander Kuchta; Priests Nicholas Finley and Elijah Mueller; Dennis Garlick, Barry Gluntz, Robert Graban, Michael Herzak, and Christine Hoover; Bishop’s Council members Archpriests Andrew Clements, Thomas Mueller, Timothy Sawchak, Paul Wesche, and Andrew Yavornitzky; and Philip Sokolov, Bishop’s Secretary.

Absent were Archpriest John Matusiak, Diocesan Secretary, Archpriest Theodore Bobosh of the Bishop’s Council; and Daria Petrykowski.

III. SCRIPTURE READINGS.

Mr. Garlick read the day’s selection from the Epistles – 1 Timothy 5:11-21 – Father Garklavs read the day’s Gospel reading – Luke 19:45-48. Bishop Paul reflected on the mandate to care for widows and how this applies to us today as we strive to express God’s love in our ministry.

IV. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS.

Father Wesche noted that IX.F should read, “Bishop Paul in concert with the Diocesan Council and in consultation with the deanery clergy will establish the parameters for use of said funds.” The minutes were accepted as corrected upon motion by Mr. Garlick, seconded by Father Finley.

V. BISHOP’S REPORT.

Bishop Paul reported on his numerous – and enjoyable – parish visitations, emphasizing that he not only sees them as occasions to liturgize, but to get to know the faithful of the diocese. The pace has been intense. He noted that he would prefer to visit every parish once every two years, instead of every three years. With regard to his vision for the Diocese, he said that, in light of the polarization rampant in today’s society, our parishes need to become paradigms of mercy and compassion, in which good will is realized. He does not wish to see Orthodox Christianity identified with political ideologies which, if not rooted in Christ, are doomed to failure. He spoke of his pleasure concerning the Nativity Fast project to raise funds to purchase motorbikes for the clergy in Kenya, organized in partnership with the Orthodox Christian Mission Center. He also emphasized the importance of pursuing internal good order as a prerequisite of moving forward as a Diocese.

VI. CHANCELLOR’S REPORT.

Father Zdinak focused on two important matters.

A. Background checks. In the first of a three-phase process, background checks have been done on all diocesan priests and deacons, with nearly 100% compliance to date. The Diocese is funding these checks. The second phase involves background checks for ordained subdeacons and readers, with the parishes bearing the financial responsibility for said checks. The third phase involves developing a screening program for youth workers.

Bishop Paul added that he is trying to “declericalize” the orders of subdeacon and reader, noting that they should wear cassocks only when performing their liturgical duties – a serious consideration in light of the highly litigious society in which we live today. He added that he would like to have Priest Benjamin Tucci, at the next Diocesan Assembly, offer a presentation on the screening of youth workers/ministers.

B. Parishes in arrears in assessment payments. In light of a discussion on parishes in arrears in remitting assessment payments, the case of Detroit’s Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral was addressed. Bishop Paul recommended that the parish be forgiven its debt. In response, Father Zdinak, seconded by Father Dank, made a motion to this effect which, after discussion, carried unanimously. It was noted the resolution of the cathedral’s situation does not constitute a precedent for other parishes in similar circumstances, each of which will be reviewed individually.

C. Statute revision. As a result of the recent revision of the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, there is a need to revise the Diocese’s by-laws, as well as parish by-laws, to ensure that they are in conformity. Compliance is required within two years. Father Garklavs was appointed chairman of the committee which will facilitate said revisions. Committee members include Father Kuchta, Dr. Alice Woog, and Thomas Anastis, consultant attorney.

VII. STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE REPORT.

Father Finley reported that to date, 50% of the diocese’s parishes have responded to the request for detailed financial information. Father Zdinak noted that, in speaking with Simeon Morbey, who chairs the committee, he stressed that the Stewardship Committee must work in concert with the Finance Committee to discern funding needs.

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION.

The Council discussed matters related to the Diocesan Center and Christ the Savior Church.

IX. DEANERY REPORTS.

A. Chicago Deanery. Father Thomas Mueller reported that a pastoral change at Saint Nicholas Church, Joliet, IL is

anticipated in January 2016..

- B. Cleveland Deanery.** Father Clements reported that parishes that recently experienced pastoral changes were doing well. He requested prayers for the health of Archpriest Daniel and Eliane Rentel.
- C. Indianapolis Deanery.** No additions.
- D. Kansas City Deanery.** Father Sawchak noted the repose of Archpriest Thomas Succarotte in August. He also provided an update on the possible merger of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church, Madison, IL, and Saints Cyril and Methody Church [OCA Bulgarian Diocese], Granite City, IL.
- E. Michigan Deanery.** Father Yavornitzky reported that Detroit's Holy Trinity Church celebrated its 100th Anniversary. Concerning Detroit's Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral, he reported that it would receive a \$10,000.00 one-year grant from the Diocese, earmarked for pastoral ministry, for 2016. Priest Alexander Patiyuk currently celebrates the Sunday Divine Liturgy but does not provide a pastoral presence. The cathedral serves nearly 100 people in need every Sunday, a ministry for which Priest Paul Albert serves as spiritual advisor.
- F. Minneapolis Deanery.** Father Wesche offered an update concerning the closing of Saint Nicholas Church, Chisholm, MN and the passing on of its property to parish "alumni," provided that they satisfy preconditions. He noted that Saint Peter the Aleut Church, Minot, ND will be in need of a new rector as the ailing Archimandrite Anastasy [Fehr] is slated to retire at the end of 2015. Prospects for appointing a rector for Holy Resurrection Church, Fargo, ND appear positive with the possible assignment of a new seminary graduate at the end of the school year. He concluded by speaking of the \$100,000.00 given to the Diocese to be used for missions in the Minneapolis Deanery. Deanery clergy recently met with Bishop Paul to discuss the best way to use these funds.

X. METROPOLITAN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT.

In addition to the written report, Father Kuchta welcomed Robert Graban as the Diocese's new lay representative. Mr. Graban was appointed by Bishop Paul to complete the term left vacant by Samuel D'Fantis.

XI. TREASURER'S REPORT.

Mr. Koncel reported that at last evening's Finance Committee meeting, the auditors' recommendations were reviewed. The 2015 audit report was very good, and no problems were found with credit cards. The auditors did recommend that there be a written policy for record retention. They also made recommendations concerning the reinvestment of the Fidelity funds. Since these are basically low-yield money market accounts earning less than one percent, it was recommended that we look into Morgan Stanley funds, which are professionally managed and earning current market rates. Mr. Koncel stated that he is waiting for a proposal from Morgan Stanley, adding that since these are reserve funds, we would not want to embrace anything that would be considered "high risk."

Mr. Koncel went on to explain that the Diocesan Parish/Mission Development Fund is a summary of the Morgan Stanley funds. At the beginning of 2015, there was \$434,819.00 in the fund, which at present totals \$432,034.05, representing a \$2,700.00 loss. Concerning the Fidelity funds, funds were withdrawn as necessary, but there was no substantial interest. It was reported that, beginning January 1, 2016 and continuing at the end of each quarter thereafter – April 1, July 1, and October 1 – Mr. Sokolov will send to the priest and treasurer of every parish statements indicating the full dollar amount that the parish is in arrears. This can be in the form of an e-mail or hard copy – or both – based on what the parish decides is best.

Turning attention to the 2016 budget, Mr. Koncel observed that it is essentially the same as that for 2015, although it reflects \$14,000.00 in anticipated income for the annual seminarian appeal with a corresponding expense for the same amount.

After brief discussion, the budget was accepted unanimously upon motion by Father Kuchta, seconded by Father Elijah Mueller.

In related matters, a proposal was received from Joseph Kormos, in which he requested \$10,000.00 for his programs. The sum of \$5,000.00 is earmarked for the small parish forum, which the diocese has been paying for the past two years in the form of a single check sent to the host parish, to be used for travel expenses for Midwest Diocesan attendees. It was not stated whether the \$5,000.00 would be paid to Mr. Kormos directly as a regular stipend, or whether he would bill the Diocese. Father Zdinak stated that the \$10,000.00 would be taken from the amount budgeted for mission grants. The Finance Committee proposed that an additional sum of up to \$5,000.00 is earmarked to that Mr. Kormos may target two or three parishes. This amount also will be withdrawn from the Mission Development Fund, but remains distinct from the mission grants line item in the budget. In response to a proposal from Priest Benjamin Tucci and David Lucs, \$5,000.00 will be earmarked to fund a diocesan-wide youth event during the FOCA convention in Chicago July 22-27, 2016.

XII. PARISH DEVELOPMENT/MISSIONS.

Father Thomas Mueller reported that in October 2015, a Mission Council consisting of eight to ten members was organized and held its first on-line meeting. Past guidelines were reviewed. Parish Development Grants were awarded to Holy Myrrhbearers Chapel, St. Cloud, MN; Holy Transfiguration Church, Livonia, MI to expand the parish's hygiene kit program for the homeless; Saints Cyril and Methodius Church, Milwaukee, WI to develop a prayer garden; and Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral, Detroit, MI, to help finance its weekly free dinners for the needy. An additional \$10,000.00

also was awarded to Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral to help attract and support a resident priest. The Mission Council will provide grants to mission priests in December 2015.

XIII. VOCATIONS.

Father Elijah Mueller reported that at present there are 48 students enrolled in the program, three of whom have just started the program. Seven individuals have recently completed their studies, one of whom will be seeking ordination. With 18 students, Dayton, OH has the largest number of participants. The 2015 conference in Detroit attracted 30 participants, while the 2016 gathering will be held at Saint Iakovos Retreat Center in southern Wisconsin August 12-13.

XIV. NEW BUSINESS.

The 2016 Diocesan Assembly will be held in Chicago October 10-12. The next Diocesan Council meeting will be held 1 June 2016.

XV. ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned with the singing of the Hymn to the Theotokos at 2:41 p.m. upon motion by Father Elijah Mueller, seconded by Mr. Gluntz.

*Respectfully submitted,
Mr. Philip Sokolov with Archpriest John Matusiak, Diocesan Secretary*