

MEETING OF THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF THE DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

Chicago, Illinois • 16 June 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 10:21 a.m.

II. ATTENDANCE.

Present were Bishop Paul; Archpriest John Zdinak, Diocesan Chancellor; Archpriest John Matusiak, Secretary; Mr. Robert Koncel, Treasurer; Archpriest Alexander Garklavs, Archpriest Alexander Kuchta, Priest Nicholas Finley, Priest Elijah Mueller, Mr. Samuel D’Fantis, Mr. Dennis Garlick, Mr. Michael Herzak Jr., Ms. Christine Hoover, and Mrs. Daria Petrykowski. Also present were Archpriest John Jillions, OCA Chancellor; Ms. Melanie Ringa, OCA Treasurer; and Archpriests Theodore Bobosh, Andrew Clements, Thomas Mueller, Timothy Sawchak, Paul Wesche and Andrew Yavornitzky, Bishop’s Council; and Mr. Philip Sokolov.

Absent were Archpriests James Dank and Emilian Hutnyan and Mr. Barry Gluntz.

III. SCRIPTURE READINGS.

Ms. Hoover read the day’s selection from the Epistles – Romans 7:14-8:2 – while Father Finley read the day’s Gospel reading – Matthew 10:9-15.

IV. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS.

The minutes were accepted as presented.

V. DISCUSSION ON AAC FUNDING PROPOSAL.

At this time, Father John Jillions and Ms. Ringa were introduced.

Father John began by noting that His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon and representatives of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA are meeting with His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew today, adding that Metropolitan Tikhon is being received as a head of a Church. He noted that the OCA’s vision of a united Orthodox Church in North America is more in line with the Patriarch’s vision than those of the ethnic churches. He also spoke of the release of Metropolitan Jonah to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, the drafting of regulations concerning readers, subdeacons and monastics, and related matters.

In speaking of the proposed funding resolution prepared for the 18th All-American Council, Ms. Ringa reported that she and other members of the Administration have been visiting each diocese in this regard. Immediately after the 16th All American Council in Seattle, the first meeting of diocesan chancellors and treasurers was held at the OCA Chancery, at which discussions on how to transition to proportional giving were held. Meetings with individual dioceses were initiated. In February 2015, the Metropolitan Council Finance Committee developed a resolution moving towards proportional giving, but with a “floor,” adding that the consensus was that the OCA could not sustain itself with less funding. In practical terms, the assessment for 2016-2018 will be the greater of the 2015 dollar amount or 34% of the diocesan budget. Some dioceses – New York/New Jersey, New England, and Eastern Pennsylvania – objected to the “floor,” necessitating the revision of the resolution at the March 2015 Session of the Holy Synod. “If we’re going to eliminate the ‘floor,’ there has to be some compromise on the other end,” she observed.

Ms. Ringa went on to explain further amendments to the resolution drafted during last week’s Holy Synod retreat.

Father Zdinak said that it needs to be made clear that the Diocese continues to collect assessments according to 2015 levels – \$86 for the Diocese and \$90 for the OCA – so that \$176 is the new Diocese assessment from which we tithe.

After considerable discussion, it was clear that Diocesan Council members agreed that the funding level for the Central Church should *not* be reduced.

VI. BISHOP’S REPORT.

Bishop Paul reported that progress is being made on the priorities he had established at the January 2015 meeting. With regard to visitations, he noted that he has visited 60-65 parishes to date and spoke of his experiences, especially with regard to full weekend visits, hierarchical services, meetings with the clergy and their families, parish councils, etc.

With regard to liturgical practices, he stated that he does not envision issuing any “guidelines” in the immediate future in light of the diversity in the Diocese and the fact that he firmly believes in pastors’ discretion in such matters. He is considering establishing a liturgical work group to “standardize” the order of certain services, such as Vespers and Baptismal Liturgies, for which there are no uniform orders.

Bishop Paul also noted that he has met with some, but not all, of the other bishops in the Chicago area and that he is confident in his positive experiences with the Holy Synod.

VII. CHANCELLOR’S REPORT.

Father Zdinak reported on a number of matters.

A. Administrative Action Concerning Parishes in Arrears on Assessments. At present we carry on our books accounts receivable of nearly \$500,000. A new process for contacting parishes in arrears in their assessments has been put in place and will be initiated in the immediate future.

B. Diocesan compliance, sexual misconduct guidelines. Bishop Paul sees this as a three-step process: getting background checks on priests and deacons; compiling a list of tonsured subdeacons and readers and conducting

appropriate background checks, at parish expense; and seeking clarification as to what kind of screen procedure is required for Church school teachers.

- C. **Diocesan Funding/Stewardship Committee.** As mandated by the 2012 Diocesan Assembly, a committee was formed to explore ways to fund the Diocese. Committee members include Simeon Morbey, Jerry Roberts, Warren Griggs, Daria Petrykowski, and Father Finley. An account has been established with Cisco WebEx to facilitate video conferencing for up to 20 individuals.
- D. **Policy and Procedures for Assignment of Priests to Parishes.** Appropriate procedures have been issued, emphasizing the fact that assignments are made by the Bishop in cooperation with the parishes through their deans.
- E. **Vacancy for Lay Representative to the Metropolitan Council.** In response to Mr. D’Fantis’ request to be relieved of his duties as Metropolitan Council lay representative and the inability of the elected alternate to fulfill said duties, it was agreed that a new delegate will be elected at the Diocesan Assembly to complete Mr. D’Fantis’ term only.

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 had nothing to add to his report.
- B. **Cleveland Deanery.** Father Clements had nothing to add to his report.
- C. **Indianapolis Deanery.** It was noted that Father Bobosh is suffering from stage three lung cancer.
- D. **Kansas City Deanery.** Father Sawchak noted that the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church, Madison, IL, and Saints Cyril and Methody Church [OCA Bulgarian Diocese], are exploring the possibility of merging into a single parish. Father Finley added that Bishop Paul and His Grace, Bishop Alexander have given their blessing to this possibility. The merged parish would use the facilities at Saints Cyril and Methody but fall within the Diocese of the Midwest, with Father Finley serving as rector. Some joint services are already being held.
- E. **Michigan Deanery.** Father Yavornitzky spoke of finding a pastor for Detroit’s Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral.
- F. **Minneapolis Deanery.** Father Wesche reported that two mission parishes in the northern Twin Cities suburbs have closed. A plan to merge the missions did not materialize. One mission had significant assets with property and over \$100,000 in the bank. The property was given back to the original donor, while the \$100,000 has been given to the diocese “to be used for missions in the Minneapolis Deanery.” Bishop Paul, in concert with the Diocesan Council and in consultation with the deanery clergy, will establish the parameters for use of said funds.

X. METROPOLITAN COUNCIL REPORT.

In addition to the written report, Father Kuchta spoke of the proposed revisions to the OCA *Statute*, to be considered at the 18th All-American Council. He noted that the Metropolitan Council supports the revision and its adoption.

XI. TREASURER’S REPORT.

Mr. Koncel highlighted various points of his written report, noting that the diocese is currently experiencing a \$26,000 deficit. This will necessitate accessing money from the escrow funds. Father Thomas Mueller reminded the Council that consideration had been given to earmarking \$15,000 per year from the Parish Mission Development Fund to establish a planting grant for Detroit’s Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral.

XII. PARISH DEVELOPMENT/MISSIONS.

Father Thomas Mueller reported that one priest and one lay person – Priest Joel Weir and Mr. Greenwald – participated in the OCA’s first Mission School, held in Detroit in April 2015. He and Bishop Paul will meet with them in the near future to determine how they might be engaged in the Diocese on a wider level. He also noted plans to republish the Mission Planting Guidelines developed a few years ago. He hopes to revive the Parish Development Grants and hopefully to issue a call for applications in August or September. A few thousand dollars could be earmarked for parishes to engage in imaginative, creative projects outside their usual budgeted concerns.

Father Elijah Mueller spoke of the Saint Macrina Orthodox Institute, reporting that there are currently 50-plus students enrolled throughout the Diocese. The Second Annual Conference will be held at Saint Andrew Retreat Center, Detroit, August 7-8, 2015. Father Bogdan Bucur will be the keynote speaker. In 2014, 40 individuals attended.

XIII. OLD BUSINESS.

With regard to Diocesan Archives, it was reported that Mr. Nicholas Groves submitted a proposal to box, sort and ultimately digitize the archives. It was recommended that Mr. Groves sign a confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement due to the sensitive nature of the archives.

XIV. NEW BUSINESS.

The next Diocesan Council meeting will be convened in November or December at a date and time to be announced.

XV. ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned with the singing of the Hymn to the Theotokos at 2:43 p.m. upon motion by Mr. Garlick, seconded by Mr. D’Fantis.

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

Metropolitan Council Representative Report
June 16, 2015

Spring meetings of the Metropolitan Council took place Tuesday, February 10 through Thursday, February 12, 2015 at the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington NY, Minutes and all reports generated for and by these meetings are available on OCA.org

Apart from the regular reports given by Metropolitan Tikhon, chancery officers and Committee heads, the most important reports given had to do with the convening of the OCA's All American Council (AAC) in Atlanta, GA in July. Fr. Eric Tosi presented highlights of the planning taking place under the guidance of the Pre-Conciliar Committee and presented a draft agenda for the week. FOCA's annual convention will be combined with the AAC.

Two items of special importance to be addressed by the AAC will be the adoption of updated Statutes for the Church and the resolution formulated for funding the work of the OCA:

On Statute Revisions: The MC heard reports of the Statute revision Committee given by Fr. Alexander Rentel and Judge E.R. Lanier. As of the time of this meeting, the document was being reviewed by a legislative editor and with the blessing of the Holy Synod it will be posted for review by the entire Church. If there are any revisions or corrections suggested during this review they will be included as appropriate. The intention of the Task Force is to present this document to the AAC for an up or down vote because any more detailed discussion of the document which is 50 pages in length would be virtually impossible to manage. The statute revisions do not propose or include any structural changes to the OCA. Rather, they take into account the history and challenges that we have faced as an autocephalous church over the past 45 years for which we have had little or no statutory guidance. The MC supports this revision and the adoption of this document is highly recommended. Again, this document is easily available online.

The other issue of importance that the AAC will undertake is the funding of the Church over the next triennium. As you recall, the last regular AAC in Seattle saw the adoption of a funding resolution that reduced the annual assessments and which supposedly had the intention of increasing funding by encouraging increased stewardship/proportional giving as opposed to the long relied upon "head tax". This approach has been embraced by the Dioceses of the West and the South. I believe that Fr. John Jillions, OCA Chancellor, and Ms. Melanie Ringa, OCA Treasurer will be present for our Diocesan

Council meeting on June 16 in order to share background and the rationale of the funding resolution. Funding the work of the Church has and continues to be an extremely difficult issue. Many parishes and dioceses are struggling to fund their work. An additional problem has been the desire on the part of some to convey the message to Central Church Administration that they must “live within their means”.

Administration in Syosset is not bloated as it was in the past. Costs have been cut and staffing has been tremendously reduced. In the end, we need to focus on better stewardship and foster generosity on every level of the Church: parish, dioceses and Central. I hope that the desire to do this will be an integral feature of our next AAC with its theme of expanding the mission.

Respectfully submitted,

Archpriest Alexander Kuchta