

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*

Report of Diocesan Metropolitan Council Representatives

Fall 2015 Metropolitan Council (MC) meetings took place from September 22-24 at the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington (Long Island) NY. A one day retreat was held on Monday, September 21 and featured talks on the Book of Revelation by Dr. Mary Ford and "Becoming Human" by Fr. John Behr.

The MC is going through a transition of sorts in that we have seen quite a few familiar faces disappear, as members "term out". Bob Graban from Livonia Michigan is filling out the final year of Sam D'Fantis' term. He joined a host of new people at this, his first meeting. While our "time of trouble" was mentioned a few times, we are not experiencing any real difficulty now. Because of this the MC was able to turn its attention to matters at hand: the rollout of the revised Statute of the OCA, dealing with the 2016 budget, some restructuring of the MC committees and most importantly the vision of Metropolitan Tikhon for the mission and life of the Church.

The revised Statutes become effective on November 1st and no real difficulties are anticipated. Dioceses have to make sure that they have Diocesan bylaws in place in order to comply. We have had them for some time. Going forward with the Statute rollout should not present any difficulties for us. It was also pointed out that **parishes**, monasteries, seminaries and other institutions will need to make sure their bylaws are compatible with the revised Statute; they need to be reviewed and must conform by December 31, 2017.

The budget presented to the MC is a "balanced budget", with a net surplus of \$153,670. The decrease in anticipated assessments due to the new Finance Resolution was \$140,742, which required that expenses be cut to arrive at a balanced budget. Cuts in 7 areas resulted in \$144,000 of budget reductions. We also anticipate a bit of a surplus for 2015. Melanie Ringa is working with Diocesan treasurers to determine the amount of support that the central administration can anticipate from them in the coming year; at the time of the meeting, she had income numbers from everyone except the Dioceses of Eastern Pennsylvania and the Midwest. Overall, council members felt that we took an important step at the AAC in Atlanta by moving towards proportional giving/support model for Church funding. How this will be implemented in our diocese will depend on the thinking of our Diocesan Council, Treasurer, and stewardship/financial committee.

Maureen Ahern, administrator the OCA Pension Plan presented a proposal of the Pension Board to make it possible for retired clergy to serve small missions. Under this proposal, a retired priest could serve a small mission parish (less than 50 souls: adults and children) for a maximum of two years. Parishes would offer at most \$2,000 per month in combined compensation and the priest could continue to receive his pension. After two years and/or the growth of the mission, the priest could do one of two things: move on to another mission situation, or simply retire. The proposal was amended to stipulate that there be "No more than 50 souls **at time they come into the mission**", so as not to penalize the mission priest for extraordinary growth; the proposal passed as amended. There was a suggestion that this plan be expanded to include older parishes in need of revitalization. Ms. Ahern will report back to the Pension Board for their analysis of the additional proposals, considering the actuarial data and the effect it might have on the soundness of the pension plan funding.

About 10 years ago, the MC underwent some restructuring and adopted the use of a variety of committees which would continue the work of the MC between regular meetings. Some of these committees, e.g. Ethics, Council Development, and Internal Governance, were formed to deal with the

aftermath of difficulties of previous administrations. Since many of these issues have disappeared and some committees have had no need to meet, changes were made. The Council Development Committee is now part of Internal Governance, and the Crisis Management Committee is now the Crisis Management Team, which works through and with the Holy Synod, Metropolitan Council and Chancery

The MC was updated in closed session on the work of the Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations [ORSMA]. After the end of the closed session, the processes used for both prevention and investigation were presented. Archpriest John Jillions spoke about the newly revitalized Department of Pastoral Life and shared its future plans.

The MC approved a plan for two new publications—a monthly PDF news digest and an annual, hard copy journal that will be sent in bulk to all parishes.

The most important topic of discussion and work at meetings had to do with Metropolitan Tikhon's document, "The Apostolic Work of the Church, Building the House of the Lord in our Lands". In this paper, His Beatitude presented four broad areas of focus that bishops, clergy and the faithful of our Church must address in order to build the Church. These areas are: the Spiritual life, Stewardship, Evangelism and Outreach, and External relations. He then took each of these areas and made specific proposals with respect to each of the areas (which he likened to the four pillars of an altar) along with a timeline for the coming year during which goals and priorities of the pillars would be tuned. Metropolitan Tikhon engaged the MC and solicited our input for adjustments to the plan. He will also ask for input from the Holy Synod, Chancellors, treasurers, and dioceses through a number of vehicles (e.g. Diocesan assemblies, Council meetings, Deanery meetings, town halls, etc.) This is an ambitious undertaking and hopefully we can all offer our ideas and suggestions to the end of promoting the health of our Orthodox Church in America.

Respectfully submitted,
Archpriest Alexander Kuchta
Bob Graban