

Report of Diocesan Metropolitan Council Representatives

The Fall 2017 Metropolitan Council (MC) meetings took place from September 19-22 at the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington (Long Island) NY. The meeting was chaired by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, with His Eminence, Archbishop Michael and His Grace, Bishop Paul in attendance. His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin was not present due to illness.

Sessions opened with a **one-day retreat** during which Archivist Alexis Liberovsky reflected on the history of the OCA within the context of the 50th Anniversary of the granting of autocephaly, slated to be celebrated in 2020. Also addressing the Council were the members of the original delegation who traveled to Moscow in 1970 to receive the Tomos of Autocephaly — Protopresbyter Daniel Hubiak, Archpriest John Nehrebecki and Dr. Constantine Kallaur — who shared their experiences and insights. Metropolitan Council members spent the remainder of the retreat discussing possible activities and celebrations marking the anniversary, as well as the 50th Anniversary of the glorification of Saint Herman of Alaska, also to be observed in 2020.

Metropolitan Tikhon, in his opening remarks, reflected on the 2014-15 OCA Statement of Purpose, then expanding upon the work that has been going on since 2015 refining the “4 Pillars”. His Beatitude presented a draft booklet he has authored; comments and critiques were solicited, and a version for public distribution is anticipated in the near future. Funding was approved for a consultant to help with communication of the 4 Pillars.

His Beatitude also expressed concern for the Mexico earthquake that occurred early in the meeting. Subsequently, the MC authorized \$5,000 for Mexico earthquake relief and an additional \$600 was received from MC members, with plans to solicit donations through special collections at parishes on October 1. Expressing caution about various scams unfortunately taking place and looking at the real needs of affected families and how to best use the money, his Eminence, Bishop Alejo of Mexico asked that only \$3,000 of the approved funds be wired on 9/22, and to await further instruction on the balance.

Archpriest John Jillions, **Chancellor**, reviewed the work of the Department of Pastoral Life, as presented by Priest Nathan Preston, Department Administrator. Fr. Nathan reported that he meets monthly in Syosset, and the revision of guidelines for clergy has been completed. There is an avenue for clergy wives to communicate, and there is a clergy projection project, looking at the ages and future needs for priests. The clergy compensation guidelines from the late 1990’s are quite good, but in need of updating. There are currently a number of clergy in the crisis protocol, though not necessarily suspended.

A question arose about Fr. John Jillions’ participation, in his role as a St. Vladimir’s Seminary faculty member and not as OCA Chancellor, along with other Orthodox theologians to discuss matters of sexuality and pastoral care at a conference at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. This meeting has caused controversy in Orthodox circles, and there was discussion that if there is any future participation, someone less prominent than the Chancellor of the OCA, such as Fr. Nathan

Preston should represent the OCA. [Links for reference: <http://bit.ly/2y9sWz0> and <http://bit.ly/2wlsrgY>]

In his reporting on the work of the Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA) and the Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee (SMPAC), Fr. John Jillions video conferenced Cindy Heise and Bernie Wilson. Data was presented on cases since 2015, without names, indicating whether clergy or a lay person was involved, with the date the complaint was received, whether it was a child or adult involved, the date of the preliminary inquiry, date of the investigation, date closed, date of spiritual court, and case disposition (sustained, exonerated, not sustained, or unfounded). During this 3 year period, there were only 3 investigations, 2 of which resulted in an exoneration and one in which the allegation was sustained. Because of the lack of investigation activity, the finance committee, supported by the MC as a whole decided it was not worth paying Bernie Wilson a fee of \$36,000 per year to be our investigator; a reduced budget of \$12,000 was approved to hire an investigator as required.

Archpriest Eric Tosi, **Secretary**, reported on work being done to improve the physical environment and security of the archives facility, funded by a donor bequest. A new roof was installed on the center portion of the Chancery, but the swimming pool on the back portion of the property still has not been removed due to budgetary constraints. Work is proceeding in preparation for the 19th All American Council in St. Louis July 23-27, 2018 (<https://19aac.oca.org/>). There will be at least one proposed statute revision, to perform the internal audit annually instead of twice per year, as called for presently. The statute committee has been formed, with Bishop Daniel as the chair, and the resolution committee is under the chairmanship of Bishop Paul. We discussed the issue of sponsoring delegates from Alaska and Mexico to help fund their travel to AAC.

The **Charity Committee** provides food, shelter, and medical care, mostly to clergy in need, with the payments going to the provider and not the individual. The Charity Committee is making a donation of \$1,000 to IOCC for hurricane relief, and will do a solicitation for donations in November. The primary means to donate is through a button on the right side of the OCA homepage. As a clarification, the decision last winter by the charity committee to donate \$1,000 to Church World Services in support of Syrian refugees was done by email and was not unanimous. Governing New York law stipulates that decisions made by boards of non-profits through email must be unanimous with the emails retained for documentation. Since the committee did not realize back then that this was a requirement, especially for financial decisions, a motion was made at the Metropolitan Council to approve this past expenditure; the motion was approved with 15 in favor, 7 opposed and 4 abstaining.

The HR committee has completed job descriptions, and they are now residing with Metropolitan Tikhon as he integrates them into his vision. They are now working on the HR handbook, including issues of working from home and on more comprehensive leave policies.

Melanie Ringa, the **Treasurer** reported that we again passed with a clean external audit, and the internal audit was also favorable with only a few minor recommendations. We are \$41,000 under

budget this year, mostly due to the repose of Archimandrite Alexander Pihach of the representation church of St. Catherine the Great Martyr in Moscow, who has not yet been replaced as rector. The contributions of the dioceses (no longer called assessments) are decreasing by 2% each year. To balance the budget, investigator Bernie Wilson is being released, reducing the cost from a fixed \$36,000 per year to a budgeted \$12,000, to be spent if and when needed. The OCA will be saving \$10,000 by Cindy Heise going on her husband's medical insurance, and a consultant to the Metropolitan has been added, at \$8,600 for 3 months. Planting grants total \$100k, with \$75k coming from the operating budget and \$25k from a missions bequest. The 2018 budget, at \$1,845,434.96 is balanced. Melanie will be traveling to Moscow the week of September 24 to do an audit of the St. Catherine's representation church and to follow up on financial matters that require attention in the absence of a rector. The balance of the endowments (restricted investments and trusts) was \$2.45 million at the end of August, up from \$2.2 million on December 31, 2016. A new investment policy, drawing upon the experience of others with similar strategies has been drafted and is being fine-tuned as needed.

With regard to **External Affairs** and the report by and discussion with Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky, it seems that the one Orthodox Church most sympathetic to the Ecumenical Patriarch's desire for ecumenical unity is the OCA. We are putting together a vision what a unified church would look like, though not claiming jurisdiction. An analogy was made to rough rocks, rounding each other off on the path to unity; as witnesses willing to serve Christ, we will eventually get somewhere.

The **Pension Board** was not present at the meeting; Fr. Eric Tosi was asked to read the report submitted by Fr. Gleb McFatter, chairman. There are currently 339 active participants, the highest number to date, and there are 178 recipients of monthly benefits (not included in the 339 active participants). The time-weighted investment return for the period of January 1 through July 31, 2017 was 9.02%, compared to their benchmark of 9.35%. Discussion ensued about the underfunded status of the pension plan, though improving with the current increased participation and returns.

Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak reported that through the **Stewards of the OCA** that \$46,000 has been donated this year, but we want to get it to \$100,000, with a drive in October with mailings to all parishes with a poster, brochure, pledge cards, and a letter from Metropolitan Tikhon to be read from the amvon. It is \$300 per year to be a steward. Over the years, the OCA has given over \$1 million to missions, with \$100,000 in mission planting grants this year. Metropolitan Tikhon has suggested that when he visits a parish, instead of the parish providing him with an honorarium, the parish instead becomes a steward of the OCA.

Fr. John Parker reported for the **Department of Evangelization**, with their website at <http://goodnews.oca.org>. Fr. John would like to see the \$1 million in endowments for missions unlocked, with a suggestion to deposit \$500,000 into the OCEC organization that makes loans to parishes for capital projects, and then \$100,000 annually after the first year. There was a presentation made to MC, per Fr. John Parker's suggestion by 5 Sees, the film group that produced "Becoming Truly Human." This company, whose president, Dr. Nathan Jacobs and vice president, Sarah Werner are OCA members requested a grant of \$100,000 to help produce a

documentary about the Orthodox Church. They have a “funnel strategy” where the feature film begins the conversation with the largest audience possible and then moves them to the documentary, which moves deeper into the topic. The feature, “Paranormal” is based upon the true story of Fr. Maximos McIntyre (ROCOR), former skeptic turned Orthodox priest documenting famed paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren. “Fr. Maximos helps the family to realize that every soul is always moving toward either darkness or light [...] even in the darkness the family experiences, light is always present, offering the only refuge from darkness”. A motion was made to thank them for the presentation but advising them we are unable to send any funds at this point.

Parishes were encouraged to make known the existence of two documents entitled “[A Gift for my Loved Ones](#)” and “[Another Gift for my Loved Ones](#)”, which provide a template for medical power of attorney / advance directives and for funeral planning which are in harmony with The Church’s teachings. They are found in the “About the OCA” section, and then clicking on “Documents”.

The meeting concluded on Saturday, September 23 with the Metropolitan Tikhon presiding at the **St. Sergius Day feast**. Concelebrating with Metropolitan Tikhon at the Liturgy, which was celebrated in the Chancery’s walled garden, were His Grace, Bishop Irinej [Dobrijevic] of the Serbian Orthodox Diocese of Eastern America, and His Grace, Bishop John of Naro-Fominsk, Administrator of the Patriarchal Parishes in the United States, of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Respectfully submitted,
Archpriest Alexander Kuchta
Bob Graban
September 28, 2017