

## Report of Diocesan Metropolitan Council Representatives

The September 2018 Metropolitan Council (MC) meetings took place from September 18-21 at the Immaculate Conception Seminary in Huntington (Long Island) NY. The meeting was chaired by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, with His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin and His Grace, Bishop Paul in attendance.

**Metropolitan Tikhon**, in his opening remarks, spoke specifically about the Chancery restructuring plan. His Beatitude reported that he has accepted the resignation of the three officers of the Church and will move forward on the transition and restructuring. The Chancellor will be chief of staff for the chancery, with strengthened authority, while retaining financial safeguards. The MC will have the opportunity to endorse the selection of Chancellor via a conference call, as well as subsequent officer selections; the responsibility for approval is with the Holy Synod. More information will be made available following the Fall Session of the Holy Synod of Bishops.

In the **Secretary's report**, Fr. Eric Tosi reported the Chancery archive renovation project has progressed through the planning and local governmental approval process, with construction work to begin soon. Archive materials will be stored in temporary pods in the parking lot for 2-3 weeks. The new Metric Book is now available. In his report on the **All-American Council**, Fr. Eric reported we are \$65,000 under budget (at this time); the surplus will be used for the planning of the 20<sup>th</sup> All-American Council, slated to convene in 2021. **The finance resolution and the process of getting to a full-time youth were the actionable items to come out of the 19<sup>th</sup> AAC.** Other items of note:

- The hotel staff were wonderful and were impressed with OCA. They felt we were first church group they dealt with who actually acted like Christians - our people were good, kind, generous and gracious.
- The Parliamentarian was impressed, particularly because we didn't need to use his guidance during the meetings.
- Parishes spend a lot of money to be there; **participants need to be there until the end.** The voting count at the Friday morning session was 280, down 40% from the average count (463) at the previous 4 sessions. It had been publicized that the AAC ran through Noon Friday.
- The post-council survey indicated that time management was the biggest concern. People don't need to repeat their written reports; in the future, the chairs should be unrelenting about enforcing time limits for speakers. Survey participants felt there was a good balance between worship and business aspects, but more time is needed for social activities.
- A proposal will again be submitted at the next AAC to go to four years between meetings, but this time with an interim event after 2 years, devoid of AAC official business, to which all interested youth and adults could attend, without the need to be selected by the parish.

Archpriest John Jillions, **Chancellor**, noted that this was his final report to the Metropolitan Council. He offered thanks for the seven years he has served in this capacity and expressed satisfaction that the transition team has developed a structure and new job descriptions for the officers that will enhance the effectiveness of the Chancery and Office of the Metropolitan. He also reported on efforts regarding parish compliance with mandated training to maintain safety and prevent abuse and on the current work of the Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations [ORSMA].

The Metropolitan Council endorsed a new **social media policy**, which includes a code of conduct and a policy and forms for granting permission for pictures to be used. This will be referred to the Holy Synod for their blessing, after which the policy/guidelines will be disseminated. Pastors are cautioned not to use emails or social media for counseling.

Of the various committee reports, the **Charity Committee** made a request to send \$3,000 to assist parishioners of St. Basil Church, Wilmington, NC, and this was approved by the MC. Fr. Alexander Kuchta has served as the chairman of the committee over the past several years. He has been term limited as MC clergy representative, and Fr. Antonio Perdomo will succeed him as chairman of the Charity Committee. An MC Committee Reorganization Plan is slated to be presented at the Spring 2019 Session.

In the **Treasurer's report**, Melanie Ringa presented the updated financial report for 2018 and the results of the external and internal audits. The proposed balanced budget for 2019 was presented and adopted by the MC, who also approved the internal auditors for the next triennium. There was an \$11k deficit in operations, and Stewards of the OCA contributions were under budget by \$10k. Total revenues were over budget by \$19,456, with \$22,744 representing increased diocesan support. The finance committee recommended, and the MC approved that each OCA Chancery employee will be responsible for 15% (up from 0%) of their healthcare insurance premium. This will be from pre-tax dollars, so the out-of-pocket impact will be less than 15% of premiums.

Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak reported on the work of the **Stewards of the Orthodox Church in America** [SOCA] and plans for the upcoming annual Church-wide appeal on October 21, which has been designated SOCA Sunday.

In the **External Affairs** report, Protopresbyter Leonid Kiskhovsky reviewed developments in world Orthodoxy and gave a report on recent developments in Ukraine. Subsequent to the meeting, His Beatitude issued an Archpastoral Letter concerning recent developments in Ukraine.

The **Pension Board** gave an update, with a live call in from Fr. Gleb McFatter. An update was given on the funded status, which is affected by the actuarial reviews. "All American Councils have mandated participation in the Plan for all clergy"; a discussion followed about ways to enforce compliance with that mandate, with the main focus on the dioceses. On August 31, 2018, the market value of the plan assets was \$25,264,195; the net time-weighted return on core investments during this time period was 6.10%, compared to their benchmark of 6.56%.

An extensive discussion on the use of funds raised at the 19<sup>th</sup> AAC for "the **process** of getting a full-time national youth director" was held. Metropolitan Tikhon presented a 5-page plan that was approved by the Council. The plan includes a one-year pilot program to establish the feasibility and definition of a full-time youth director/coordinator and allocated up to the total of the received pledges, not to exceed \$87,000. *[At the time of the MC meeting, \$30k of the pledges had been remitted.]* The proposal included use of a significant portion of the funds for youth events and subsidized travel, such as a youth rally in Washington, DC, a youth pilgrimage (1 or 2 persons) to the Grabarka Monastery in Poland, and a July 2019 youth choir singing retreat at St. Tikhon Monastery. Additional information will be released in the near future.

Plans are being made for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Autocephaly in 2020. Ideas presented include a large Liturgy at the Washington cathedral with many guests, celebrations at each diocese, an Alaska cruise with stops in Sitka & Kodiak, a youth rally, and perhaps publishing or updating a book with many pictures.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bob Graban  
Fr. Alexander Kuchta  
September 28, 2018

*I would like to thank the members of the Diocese for sending me to be the Diocesan Clergy representative to the Metropolitan Council (MC) and also to serve on the Diocesan Council beginning in 2011. The MC experience was unique in that it afforded me the opportunity to work with many clergy and lay people from across the country. I was impressed with the talent, expertise, and dedication that each person brought to the table. I want to thank Bob Graban for his dedication and excellent work on the MC, with the hopes that the next Clergy representative to the Council will find this experience to be as rewarding as I did.*

*Fr. Alexander Kuchta*