

Orthodox Church in America – Diocese of New England

Diocesan Council Minutes – Wednesday, August 27, 2008 – New Britain, Connecticut

1. OPENING

The regular meeting of the Diocesan Council held on Wednesday, August 27, 2008, at Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT, was opened with the singing of the “O Heavenly King” at 7:25 p.m. His Grace, Bishop NIKON, of Boston, New England and the Albanian Archdiocese chaired the meeting.

2. REVIEW OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the May 2008 Meeting of the Diocesan Council were reviewed.

Prdn. Paul Nimchek noted that the amount listed in the Treasurers Report pertaining to the deficit in the ONE Stewards collection should be \$6000 not \$3500.

MOTION: George Ludko moved, seconded by Timothy Tassmer that the minutes be accepted as corrected. The motion passed.

3. HIERARCH'S REPORT

His Grace, Bishop NIKON, presented a short oral report. Highlights of His Grace's report include:

- A thank you to all who attended the Special Diocesan Assembly last May to decided what to do with the Diocesan Residence.
- At the Spring Session of the Holy Synod, proposed clergy awards for nine priests from the diocese were accepted.
- During the first week in September the Metropolitan Council and Holy Synod will meet in joint session. The SIC report will be received by both groups at the same time.
- The two Town Hall meetings, Hartford and Boston, were very well attended by the faithful of New England. The facilitators stated that these meetings were the most productive pertaining to what to do moving forward.
- Berlin, NH – Fr. John Bednardi, who is attached to Salem, MA, will be going to Berlin, NH as 'priest-in-charge'.
- The proposed schedule for the 15th All-American Council will be different from past councils. A spirit of forgiveness and open discussion are a the heart of this changes.
- For the AAC it has been proposed that each diocese have a Diocesan Spokesman to help facilitate discussion.

4. TREASURER'S REPORT

Peter Kopcha, Diocesan Treasurer, presented a report about the diocesan finances, including distribution of detailed reports of the Diocesan Checking Summary and a comparison of Diocesan Income/Expenses and Budget for the period encompassing September 1, 2007 through to August 27, 2008. He noted that Fare Share collection is behind by approximately \$29,000. Three Saints in Ansonia is responsible for approximately \$16,000 and three other parishes are responsible for approximately another \$13,000. The balance is payments out before payments in have been recorded. We have yet to receive any OCA Mission income and after the initial Prdn. Paul Nimchek turned in a check for \$3,500 which is not reflected in the spread sheet. Youth Rally had an additional \$5,820 in income. We are behind in our projected income by \$ 48,200.

On the expense side the Bishop's Supplemental Stipend has not been implemented since the OCA has continued its payments to diocesan bishops, the Youth Rally expenses are approximately \$18,000. Our diocese is behind in making Fair Share payments due to lack of cash on hand and approximately \$ 20,000 had to be transferred from savings to checking in order to pay bills and the Fair Share for the diocese. The diocesan residence expenses are about \$ 16,000 for oil, electricity, termite extermination, repairs, security and the building inspector.

We would have a balanced budget if all parishes Fair Share was paid in full and we did not have the added property expenses.

Financial Statement of Assets - 8/27/2008

Checkbook Balance \$ 5,451.03

Diocesan Budget: 9/1/2007 – 8/27/2008

Total Actual Budget Income (Inflows) \$ 316,489.20

Total Actual Budget Expenses (Outflows) \$ 343,154.81

Total Income/Expense (Net Total) \$ (26,665.61)

MOTION: Fr. John Hopko moved, seconded by Fr. Steven Voytovich, that the Treasurer's Report be accepted as presented. The motion passed.

5. **CHOIR DIRECTOR TRAINING PROGRAM**

Fr. Steven Voytovich reported that 5 people have signed up for the program. The next session will be in October. He emphasized that our diocesan program was not in competition with any seminary program but to assist people in their parishes.

6. **DIOCESAN RESIDENCE**

Greg Shesko will be the contact person between the Real Estate Agent and the diocese. The selling price of the house has been established at \$239,900. The Cumberland housing market is having a very difficult time, may foreclosures. The assessed value of the house is \$306,000 with the major reason for the low selling price is the condition of the house and the major repairs needed. All the exterior cosmetic work has been completed.

MOTION: George Ludko moved, seconded by Fr. Marc Vranes, that an acceptable price for the house not be less than \$215, 000. Discussion on the motion focused on how an offer price would be communicated to all the DC members. Prdn. Paul Nimchek suggested that the 5 members of the housing committee be authorized on behalf of the Diocesan Council to negotiate the final selling price. Both George Ludko and Fr. Marc Vranes rescinded their motion.

MOTION: Prdn. Paul Nimchek moved, seconded by Fr. Mark Sherman, that the 5 members of the housing committee be authorized on behalf of the Diocesan Council to negotiate the final selling price. Also, the previously established minimum selling price of \$225,000 be rescinded.. Motion passed.

7. **FORCC (Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in Connecticut)**

Fr. Vladimir Aleandro stated that the next meeting will be on September 18, 2008, October 5, 2008 is set for the banquet with the guest speaker Fr. David Rucker from the OCMC and the talent show will be November 9, 2008.

8. **METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**

Fr. Mark Sherman reported on the last meeting of the MC and on what will happen at the joint meeting of the Holy Synod/Metropolitan Council. At the April meeting of the MC a problem arose with the information presented by the Pension Board. Fr. Michael Westerberg, the director of the PB and Fr. Suda, chairman of the Audit Committee presented opposing views. It was stated that the National Audit Committee was comprised of members who were not competent to audit either the PB or the OCA books. Because of this conflict the MC has developed Qualification for Auditors and will present them at the AAC for approval so that the next NAC will be able to perform this task. The fact that the members of the NAC were not qualified to file an audit may have lead to oversights.

The MC has appointed a Legal Committee comprised of three members to handle the legal issues between meetings.

A lawsuit against the Kondratick's to regain monies taken from the OCA has been filed. This was approved unanimously by the MC but the Holy Synod has not approved this action and Met. HERMAN has dis-allowed this action. This was done in order to "stop-the-clock" on the statute of limitations.

The MC went into Executive Session for discussion on the "crisis". After this session a resolution was presented requesting Metropolitan HERMAN to retire. After much discussion the motion was tabled until the September meeting. A majority of the MC favored this motion.

The MC will be drafting the 2009 budget early in September and presenting it to the church before the AAC.

9. DEAN OF MISSIONS

Fr. Mark Sherman, Dean of Missions, noted the formation of a Mission Station in Maine along the coast near Rockport. Fr. John Teag from the AOCA but not attached to any parish may be available to service this area.

10. TASK FORCE & OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, Chairman of the CER and Editor of the Diocesan Newspaper/Webmaster reported that the summer issue of ONE was being distributed. The next issue will be dedicated to the Youth Rally and Project Mexico which many of our diocesan young people have participated. Projected publish date is late September early October.

11. ONE STEWARDS

Prdn. Paul Nimchek stated that the second appeal mailing went out later than usual, late July – early August. So far \$3200 has been received because of this second chance. The ‘Bishop’s Circle’ level of contribution for those giving over \$500 has 7 couples or individuals. These folks will be going to lunch with the Bishop in November. Also, two parishes, Holy Trinity, New Britain and Christ the Savior, Southbury have contributed over \$500.

12. PENSION BOARD

Greg Shesko informed us that the board met in mid August for two days. There was a major review of all operations concerning the Pension Board. There will be a detailed report given at the AAC. Also the two part-time employees of the PB will be present. There are 303 members and 100 pensioners. The next meeting is set for September 16th. Internal Auditors, Fr. Michael Tassos, OCA Treasurer and the PB outside advisors will be present. It should be noted that all monies ‘held’ by the PB can not be accessed by the OCA administration. At the AAC there will be a large changeover of board members. Of the members that are from the Diocese of New England both Paul Culton and Greg Shesko can run again for another 3 year term but Fr. Michael Westerberg can not.

13. YOUTH

Fr. John Hopko, Youth Director of the Diocese, presented a written report (on file with the secretary). He stated that “his well known temper was aroused” because the camp was left in a terrible mess. Our rally staff cleaned-up the camp and chapel before the kids arrived. This year there were 45 kids and 15 staff (minimum needed) members, 6 male and 6 female counselors. Members of the UConn OCF were the main group of counselors. The Rally cost is approximately \$470 per kid and we are charging only \$125 per kid and \$75 for additional siblings.

MOTION: Fr. John Hopko moved, seconded by Fr. John Kreta, that the 14 staff members be given \$100 each as a small token to thanks. Motion passed.

Greg Shesko stated the Fr. John Hopko need to be thanked for all his hard work on the Youth Rally and that the increase in participants is due to his organization. The entire council agreed.

14. OLD BUSINESS

The only order of Old Business was concerning the Diocesan Residence.

15. NEW BUSINESS

A. All-American Council:

- His Grace asked if anyone would be willing to set up the booth for the diocese at the AAC. The booth will cost \$150. Fr. John Hopko will bring the poster boards since he will be driving to the AAC. Fr. Steven Voytovich will deliver the TV/DVD player to Fr. Hopko and we will show the DVD’s from the Youth Rallies.
- His Grace stated that each diocese would be asked to have a “spokesman” to be elected at their respective assemblies in order to expedite the time allotted for discussion at the AAC. Fr. John Hopko stated that all the questions that needed to be asked have been asked at the Town Hall Meetings. Fr. Mark Sherman believes that a “spokesman” approach would be received as stifling speech rather than a way to speed up the proceedings. Fr. Steven Voytovich thanked Bishop NIKON for being our voice at the Holy Synod and for allowing the Town Hall meetings to happen and allowing us in the DNE to speak openly and freely.

1. Resolutions:

- Nick Bobrovsky presented a list of suggested changes to the statute of the OCA. After looking at the list it was the consensus of the council that the items needed to be broken down by category and sent to the respective departments; changes to the statute to the Statute Committee, administrative changes to the Task Force, and canonical questions to the Committee on Canons.
- Greg Shesko presented the following resolution: The New England Diocesan Council respectfully requests Metropolitan HERMAN to retire. Second by Mat. Ann Sovyrda. After much discussion and noting that these were to be resolutions from the diocese to the AAC this resolution was withdrawn.

B. Diocesan Assembly:

- Alexia Tassmer, the DC contact person with the host parish, stated that the Providence Marriott has been secured for the assembly. A group of rooms has been blocked off at \$125. Due to the fact that Providence is a college town and it is "Parents Weekend" deadline for reservations will be two weeks before the assembly. All meetings and events will take place at the hotel on Friday, October 24th. Divine Liturgy, lunch and final sessions will be at the Dormition of the Holy Virgin Church, Cumberland, RI on Saturday, October 25th. Alexia Tassmer will compile the assembly binders. Deadline for all reports will be mid September. The guest speaker, Dean Triantafolo of IOCC, would like to speak after Bishop NIKON due to travel constraints.
- COLA: Greg Shesko presented information on the Cost of Living adjustment. The three areas reviewed are USA: 5.6%, NE: 5.7% and Boston: 6.3% As accepted at the last Diocesan Assembly the highest of the three would be accepted as the COLA therefore Greg will present **6.3% increase** to all gathered at the assembly.
- Proposed 2009 budget: Peter Kopcha asked all to review that proposed 2009 Budget that was distributed earlier with the Treasurers Report. The line item for the AAC Expense (#56500) should be reduced from \$3000 to \$2000 due to a decrease in expenses. The line item for the Youth Rally Expense (#65100) should be increased from \$15000 to \$18000. Due to the increase in the COLA all necessary line items for Bishop Expenses (#50000) will be adjusted upward. The line item Fare Share Income (#40100) will be adjusted in order to balance the budget. At this time we are unable to get an accurate number for the Fair Share until all parishes have submitted their statistics. The proposed budget will be published before the diocesan assembly.

MOTION: George Ludko moved, second by Greg Shesko, that the Proposed 2009 Budget be accepted as amended. Motion passed.

- Assembly Officers:

Clergy Vice-chairman: Fr. Dennis Rhodes
Lay Vice-chairman: Joan Skrobat
Secretariat: Fr. David Koles, George Ludko
Credentials Committee: Timothy Tassmer, Alexia Tassmer
Nominations & Resolutions: Fr. John Hopko, Greg Shesko

The slate was accepted unanimously.

- Future Assemblies: 2009 – Waterbury, CT
2010 – Springfield, VT / Clairmont, NH
2011 – Ansonia, CT

- C. **MOTION:** Greg Shesko moved, second by Mat. Ann Sovyrda, that the following resolution from the Diocesan Council be adopted.

We, the members of the Diocesan Council of The Diocese of New England support and encourage the Metropolitan Council to remove from the table Motion 21.4 “*Based upon the continuing failure of leadership to resolve decisively and without undue delay the crisis that engulfs the Orthodox Church in America, the Metropolitan Council respectfully requests the retirement of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman by no later than the opening of the All-American Council in Pittsburgh.*” and to approve this motion at the September 3-5, 2008 meeting.

Motion passes unanimously.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Diocesan Council is scheduled for Wednesday, November 19, 2008, at Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT, beginning with the celebration of Daily Vespers at 6:30 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Acting on a motion by Alexia Tassmer, the meeting closed with the singing of “It is truly meet ...”

Respectfully submitted,

Archpriest David Koles
Diocesan Secretary

Members of the Diocesan Council present for this Meeting:

1. His Grace, Bishop NIKON, Diocesan Bishop
2. Fr. John Kreta, Chancellor
3. Fr. David Koles, Diocesan Secretary
4. Peter Kopcha, Diocesan Treasurer and Manager of the Diocesan Residence, Laity-at-Large Representative
5. Fr. Mark Sherman, Metropolitan Council Clergy Representative and Dean of Missions
6. Fr. Vladimir Aleandro, Dean of the Connecticut Deanery and Clergy-at-Large Representative
7. Fr. Steven Voytovich, Clergy-at-Large Representative
8. Fr. Marc Vranes, Clergy-at-Large Representative
9. Joseph Boruch, Laity-at-Large Representative
10. Matushka Ann Sovyrda, Laity-at-Large Representative
11. Tim Tassmer, Laity-at-Large Representative
12. George Ludko, Laity-at-Large Representative
13. Alexia Tassmer, Laity-at-Large Representative
14. Nicholas Bobrovsky, Auditor (Non-Voting)
15. Protodeacon Paul Nimchek, ONE Stewards Financial Secretary
16. Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, Director of Communications – Chairman, Membership Task Force, ONE Newspaper/Webmaster
17. Fr. John Hopko, Diocesan Youth Director
18. Gregory Shesko, OCA Pension Board Representative

Members of the Diocesan Council excused for this Meeting:

1. Dn. John Zarras, Diocesan Metropolitan Council Lay Representative

Members of the Diocesan Council absent for this Meeting:

1. Fr. Robert Arida, Dean of the Boston Deanery
2. Fr. Andrew Tregubov, Dean of the Northern Deanery
3. Fr. Jason Vansuch, Clergy-at-Large Representative
4. Joan Skrobat, Laity-at-Large Representative
5. Marion Gulash, Auditor (Voting)
6. Matushka Cindy Voytovich, Auditor (Non-Voting)