

Orthodox Church in America – Diocese of New England

Diocesan Council Minutes – Wednesday, May 21, 2008 – New Britain, Connecticut

1. OPENING

The regular meeting of the Diocesan Council held on Wednesday, May 21, 2008, at Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT, was opened with the singing of the “Christ is Risen” at 7:42 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 February 2008 Meeting of the Diocesan Council were reviewed.

MOTION: Marion Gulash moved, seconded by Nicholas Bobrovsky that the minutes be accepted as presented. The motion passed.

3. HIERARCH’S REPORT

His Grace, Bishop NIKON, presented a short written report. (on file with the secretary) Highlights of His Grace’s report include:

- Special Meeting at Three Saints Church, Ansonia, CT. There were 57 people in attendance.
- Alaska: Bp. NIKOLAI was retired by the Holy Synod.
- Special Investigative Committee: Bp. BENJAMIN continues to interview people even though he has been appointed administrator of the Diocese of Alaska.
- Youth Rally & use of the Chapel: Has written to Metropolitan METHODIUS.
- Clergy Awards: all recommended were accepted by the Holy Synod.
- Romanian Diocese: two north American groups, one that is part of the OCA, may unite and join the Romanian Patriarchate.
- 100th Anniversary of Dormition of the Theotokos Church, Cumberland, RI.
- Town Hall Meeting: Wednesday, July 23, 2008 at All Saint Church, Hartford, CT at 7:00 p.m.

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 May 21, 2008. He noted that Fare Share collection is behind by \$27,000. Three Saints in Ansonia is responsible for approximately \$10,000 and three other parishes are responsible for approximately another \$10,000. The balance is payments out before payments in have been recorded. We have yet to receive any OCA Mission income and after the initial ONE Stewards mailing/campaign it is behind by \$6,000. With the vacancy in the Diocesan Residence, the lack of rental income, \$5,100 added to the budget deficit in income of \$36,660.87. On the expense side the Diocesan Bishop’s Supplemental Stipend has not been implemented since the OCA has continued its payments to diocesan bishops, ONE Newspaper has missed an issue and Charity & Discretionary Expenses are less than budgeted. Spending for this period was under budget by \$7,960.64. Monies had to be transferred from savings to checking, \$12,000, in order to pay bills due to the lack of income from Fair Share and parishes being late or with holding monies.

Financial Statement of Assets - 5/21/2008

Checkbook Balance	\$ 7,335.42
-------------------	-------------

Diocesan Budget: 9/1/2007 – 5/21/2008

Total Actual Budget Income (Inflows)	\$ 235,819.13
Total Actual Budget Expenses (Outflows)	\$ 254,737.39
Total Income/Expense (Net Total)	\$ (18,918.26)

MOTION: George Ludko moved, seconded by Timothy Tassmer, that the Treasurer’s Report be accepted as presented. The motion passed.

5. ANSONIA UPDATE

Fr. Vladimir Aleandro, Dean of the Connecticut Deanery, reported that he and Fr. John Kreta, Diocesan Chancellor, have met and continue to meet with the parish council. A new parish council was elected but His Grace has not given his blessing for it to be installed. The council does not seem to have an understanding that their actions are in direct opposition to what has been accepted by the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of New England.

Fr. John Kreta added that their council is not allowed to meet without the Chancellor and Dean. He has made it known that the parish has split itself from the Diocese of New England by going against the decisions of the Diocesan Council and the Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of New England. The rector and members of the parish only believe things that they read on Orthodox Christians for Accountability (www.ocanews.org). They think that they are helping Bishop NIKON by withholding fair share. They don't think withholding hurts the Diocesan of New England.

His Grace and both Fathers Kreta and Aleandro stated that this conflict is not about the money but the good and proper order, the unity of the Diocese of New England and the accepting the resolutions and decisions of the Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of New England.

It was noted that neither Three Saints, Ansonia nor any parish who has not in compliance with the Statute of the OCA will be allowed to be registered delegates to the Diocesan Assembly in October or the All-American Council in November.

Many members of the Diocesan Council thought it would be helpful to send a letter from the council to the parish of Three Saints. Fr. John Hopko was asked to write a statement and present it during New Business.

6. TASK FORCE & OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, Chairman of the CER and Editor of the Diocesan Newspaper/Webmaster was not present.

7. ONE STEWARDS

Prdn. Paul Nimchek stated that as of today ONE Stewards transferred \$14,000 to the diocesan treasury with approximately \$600 yet to be added. The summer issue of the ONE newspaper will have an envelope enclosed and will have a second appeal. One of the new contribution categories is the Bishop's Circle. This is for those who contribute \$500 or more. There are 5 people who have contributed to this new category.

8. YOUTH

Fr. John Hopko, Youth Director of the Diocese, presented a written report (on file with the secretary). He requested ADULTS to come to the Youth Rally this year. Last year there was the minimum amount of adult counselors. The topic for discussion this year will be "The Liturgy." Fees have remained the same but the bus ticket has gone up due to the rise in fuel costs. He stated that the cost of the rally is approximately \$15000 with income from registrations about \$4000.

His Grace has written a letter to His Eminence, Metropolitan METHODIUS of Boston, GOA concerning the use of the chapel. As of this meeting there has been no response.

9. DEAN OF MISSIONS

Fr. Mark Sherman, Dean of Missions, was not present. His Grace said that there have been inquiries from Maine.

10. SCHOLARSHIP

Peter Kopcha reported that we have one additions seminarian Jeff Frate, who is at Holy Cross to add to our current three receiving scholarship.

11. CHOIR DIRECTOR TRAINING PROGRAM

Fr. Steven Voytovich reported that there has been difficulty getting people to sign up for the program. One candidate has forwarded the deposit to the diocese and there is the possibility of another. He hoped to put an article in the newspaper to drum up candidates.

12. METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Neither delegate to the council was present. His Grace stated that the MC is beginning to 'flex their collective muscles' and taking their statutory duties seriously, both financial and advisory. This at times puts them in conflict with the Metropolitan, but they are working closely with the Holy Synod to put things in the OCA in order. Next meeting is scheduled for June.

13. DIOCESAN RESIDENCE

With the approval of the Diocese at the Special Assembly to sell the Diocesan property the following motions were put forward.

MOTION: Greg Shesko moved, seconded by Timothy Tassmer, that the Diocesan Council authorizes the Diocesan Residence Committee to select a Real Estate agent, set a listing price, engage a lawyer for the closing and to accept the best offer for the Diocesan Residence not less than \$225,000 for the sale of the property. Motion passed.

MOTION: Peter Kopcha moved, seconded by Joan Skrobat, that if the house sells before the Diocesan Assembly in October 2008, all monies received are to be put into short term CD's until the Diocesan Assembly can set up an Investment Committee to decide what to do with the funds. Motion passed.

It was mentioned by Frank Kaputa, a Special Assembly Delegate from Holy Ghost, Bridgeport, that monies collected for the Diocesan Residence came from funds that were originally to be for a potential Orthodox senior housing in New England. He had hoped that the proceeds from the sale of the residence could be used for this task again.

14. FORCC (Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in Connecticut)

Fr. Vladimir Aleandro stated that scholarship applications need to be in by June 1, 2008. Also to parishes in CT need to be current in their dues. October 5, 2008 is set for the banquet with the guest speaker Fr. David Rucker from the OCMC.

15. PENSION BOARD

Greg Shesko informed us that the board met in February and the next meeting will be on June 17th. The new administrator Maureen Ahearn is doing an awesome job. The board has hired a firm to do a complete review of the pension plan, communications and procedures. The pension board web site will be used for greater communication with members and retirees in the future. 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.

16. OLD BUSINESS

- A. 2008 Diocesan Assembly Speaker – Fr. Marc Vranes reported that the Director of the IOCC, Demetri Triantafilou has accepted our invitation to speak at the assembly. Arrangements will be forthcoming at future meetings.

17. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Fr. John Hopko read a draft statement from the Diocesan Council to be presented to the parish of Three Saints concerning the current situation and their voluntary withdrawal from the fullness of the Diocese. There was no full consensus of opinion from the members as to the content of the letter and it was decided not to send but rather to let the already in place process to continue unhindered.
- B. **MOTION:** Fr. John Hopko moved, second by Prdn. Paul Nimchek, that the Diocesan Council express its support and gratitude for the work being done by His Grace, Fr. John Kreta and Fr. Vladimir Aleandro for their ongoing efforts to restore Three Saints to the full harmony and union with the sister parishes of the Diocese of New England. Motion Passed.
- C. **MOTION:** Greg Shesko moved, second by George Ludko, that Frs. Kreta and Aleandro review the statement written by Fr. John Hopko and make any necessary changes to the text, send it to the Diocesan Council members via email for their comments, adjust the text and have the Diocesan Secretary mail the statement to the parish of Three Saints. After discussion the motion was withdrawn.

- D. Assembly Procedures – Alexia Tassmer reported that she had a few additions and corrections to the information she had emailed to all members of the Diocesan Council. She will make the necessary changes and send it out to the Dormition of the Theotokos Church, Cumberland, RI as the official procedures for the Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of New England.
- E. Joan Skrobat noted that according to the By-laws of the Diocese of New England observers to the Diocesan Assembly are eligible for election to diocesan offices. His Grace stated that this is correct and will be the procedure for the Diocesan Assembly in October.
- F. The parish of Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Terryville, CT sent a request that monies that were given to a specific parish charity from the Diocese of New England be allowed to go into their general charity fund since the reason for the specific charity no longer existed. This approval was needed in order to keep the parish actions legal. Prdn. Paul Nimchek said that the monies were taken from the diocesan discretionary fund.

MOTION: Greg Shesko moved, second by Joseph Boruch, to allow Ss. Cyril and Methodius, Terryville, CT to move said monies. Motion passed.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Diocesan Council is scheduled for Wednesday, August 27, 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 George Ludko, the meeting closed with the singing of “Shine, shine ...”

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. Vladimir Aleandro, Dean of the Connecticut Deanery and Clergy-at-Large Representative
6. Fr. Steven Voytovich, Clergy-at-Large Representative
7. Fr. Jason Vansuch, Clergy-at-Large Representative
8. Fr. Marc Vranes, Clergy-at-Large Representative
9. Joan Skrobat, Laity-at-Large Representative
10. Joseph Boruch, Laity-at-Large Representative
11. Matushka Ann Sovyrda, Laity-at-Large Representative
12. Tim Tassmer, Laity-at-Large Representative
13. George Ludko, Laity-at-Large Representative
14. Alexia Tassmer, Laity-at-Large Representative
15. Marion Gulash, Auditor (Voting)
16. Nicholas Bobrovsky, Auditor (Non-Voting)
17. Protodeacon Paul Nimchek, ONE Stewards Financial Secretary
18. Fr. John Hopko, Diocesan Youth Director
19. 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:

2. Fr. Mark Sherman, Metropolitan Council Clergy Representative and Dean of Missions
3. Fr. Robert Arida, Dean of the Boston Deanery
4. Fr. Andrew Tregubov, Dean of the Northern Deanery
5. Matushka Cindy Voytovich, Auditor (Non-Voting)
6. Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, Director of Communications – Chairman, Membership Task Force, ONE Newspaper/Webmaster