

# Orthodox Church in America – Diocese of New England

## Diocesan Council Minutes – Thursday, May 28, 2009 – New Britain, Connecticut

### 1. OPENING

The regular meeting of the Diocesan Council held on Thursday, May 28, 2009, at Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT, was opened with the singing of “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 February 2009 Meeting of the Diocesan Council were reviewed.

**MOTION:** Fr. Dennis Rhodes moved, seconded by Marion Gulash that the minutes be accepted as presented. The motion passed.

### 3. HIERARCH’S REPORT

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

- Continuing regular visitations to parishes.
- The Holy Synod held a Lenten Retreat and Strategic Planning meeting in Colorado the last week of February.
- Holy Week and Pascha were again celebrated at both Boston Cathedrals.
- Dn. John Konkle, who was at St. Vladimir’s Seminary, was ordained to the Holy Priesthood and is now at Dormition Monastery, Rives Junction, MI.
- During Great Lent, on the second Sunday, CT Deanery Lenten Vespers was held at All Saints Church, Hartford. The collection was split between the CT Deanery and the OCF’s at UConn and Yale.
- Prdn. Anthony Kruge was transferred to the Omaphorion of Met. JONAH and then to the Carpatho-Russian Diocese.
- Will be attending the regular spring session of the Holy Synod along with the Consecration of Archim. Melchizedek as bishop of Pittsburgh.
- Will be attending the dedication of the new facilities for the OCMC in St. Augustine, FL. The new building is dedicated to Archbishops ANASTASIOS of Albania & DEMETRIOS of the Greek Archdiocese.
- Will be at the 105<sup>th</sup> Pilgrimage to St. Tikhon’s Monastery.
- Celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> Ordination Anniversary of Fr. Dennis Rhodes and will celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the pastorate of Fr. Robert Arida at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston.

### 4. TRESURER’S REOPRT

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, 2008 through to May 28, 2009. He noted that income is slightly behind due to deficits in Fair Share and ONE Stewards. On the expense side, the balance sheet is coming in under budget, not because of savings but due to underpayments on Fair Share, ONE newspaper, mission support and insurance. Also, the line item for Bishop’s Travel is ahead of schedule due to multiple Synod meetings. We are also over budget on the scholarship program because there are more applicants than expected.

#### Financial Statement of Assets - 5/28/2009

Checkbook Balance \$ 2,930.08

#### Diocesan Budget: 9/1/2008 – 5/28/2009

Total Actual Budget Income (Inflows) \$ 472,716.98

Total Actual Budget Expenses (Outflows) \$ 478,804.85

Total Income/Expense (Net Total) \$ (6,087.87)

**MOTION:** John Barone moved, seconded by George Ludko, that the Treasurer's Report be accepted as presented. The motion passed.

5. TASK FORCE

Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, Chairman of the Committee for Evangelization and Revitalization (CER) presented written highlights on the Natural Church Development program. He stated that 4 churches will be participating. Christ the Savior, Southbury and Nativity of the Virgin, Waterbury have taken the initial survey and are proceeding with focus groups. St. Nicholas, Norwich is using this as a transitional tool as they prepare for a new pastor; Ss. Peter & Paul, Meriden had its first meeting. He noted that the CER has not been able to gather for a meeting but is preparing a comprehensive plan with objectives and a budget to submit at the 2009 Diocesan Assembly.

6. COMMUNICATIONS

Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, Director of Communications presented written highlights. The current issue of the paper should be arriving at homes this week. The next issue will highlight the Youth Rally and will include an appeal envelope for ONE Stewards. Also, the reply envelope will include an option to sponsor a camper at Youth Rally for \$175.

7. ONE STEWARDS

Prdn. Paul Nimchek stated that the initial \$2300 was collected by December 2008. As of this meeting \$13,700 has been collected but not yet transferred to the treasurer. The summer issue of ONE will be the second appeal for 2009.

8. YOUTH

Fr. John Hopko, Youth Director of the Diocese, presented a written report. Youth Rally, the annual event for the young people of the Diocese of New England, is scheduled to be held this year at the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston's Saint Methodios Faith and Heritage Center in Contoocook, New Hampshire from Monday, August 10, until Saturday, August 15. Staff will arrive on Sunday, August 9, in the evening. We decided to return to the Contoocook camp this year, despite a few problems last year, because we believe those problems can be addressed and rectified. The theme for this year's Rally has not yet been firmly established, but an initial proposal is that the theme be "Each and Every Day: Discerning and Doing the Will of God." We have decided that it is necessary this year to increase the Rally fee from \$125.00 per participant or \$200.00 per family to \$175.00 per participant or \$300.00 per family. I will again serve as Rally Rector and Director. We are presently working towards putting together a staff for Rally. At this point, we have two priests (Fr. Dennis Rhodes and myself) firmly committed to Rally, as well as four male counselors and one female counselor who have made commitments ranging from firm to tentative. We need more female counselors. If you know of qualified Orthodox Christian women who might serve as Rally counselors, please give their names to me.

9. MISSIONS

Fr. Mark Sherman, Dean of Missions reported that the mission in Belfast, Maine has been meeting 1 or 2 times a month. There are 12 to 15 people making up the core. Some drive 1 hour to come to the mission. He requested that they be put on the diocesan mailing list.

10. SCHOLARSHIP

Peter Kopcha stated that 5 scholarships have been given out this year for a total of \$13,500.

- Jeff Freight – St. Tikhon's Seminary
- Dn. Lee Theophan Whitfield – St. Vladimir's Seminary
- Fr. John Konkle - St. Vladimir's Seminary
- Justin Dumolan - St. Vladimir's Seminary
- Mat. Jennifer Mosher - St. Vladimir's Seminary

11. CHOIR DIRECTOR TRAINING PROGRAM

Fr. Steven Voytovich presented a written report. He stated that our diocesan program was established as an initial step for those interested in being a choir director and not as a replacement for any programs established at the seminaries. He said we have 4 candidates who meet about once a month.

## 12. METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Fr. Robert Arida and Dn. John Zarras spoke about the last MC meeting which took place at the same time as our last DC meeting. A Strategic Planning Committee has been established and Fr. Robert was appointed the chairman. There are 11 members and the initial meeting will be June 18 – 20 at SVS during the Summer Institute. Their task is to take a hard look at ourselves and evaluate the relationship of the national church to other national churches, the national church to the diocese, the diocese to the parish, etc. The timeframe is to report at the next All American Council.

In June there will be a preliminary meeting, in Cypress, in preparation for the Great and Holy Synod of all Orthodox Churches without any representation of the OCA or any other church in the US.

His Beatitude will be speaking three times this summer and fall about Orthodox unity in America. The first will be at the Summer Institute at SVS; second at the AOCA conference in September; and third at Antiochian Village in October.

The status of the OCA Treasurer was discussed and Fr. Michael Tassos will resign as of June 1, 2009. The MC hasn't finalized a posting for the position, discussing full-time vs. part-time.

Bp. NIKON stated that the Holy Synod will meet with the MC at least twice each year and the Lesser Synod will meet at all MC meetings. Also, each MC Committee will have a staff member and an Episcopal moderator.

## 13. FORCC

The next meeting will be June 18<sup>th</sup> at St. Barbara Church, Orange, CT. Scholarship dinner will be October 4<sup>th</sup> and the guest speaker will be Met. JONAH.

## 14. PENSION BOARD

The next meeting of the pension board will be on June 8<sup>th</sup>. The Actuary will be reviewing the proposed changes to the plan. The plan has approximately \$20 million. The assumption of the plan was that all clergy would join the plan and would enter around 25 years of age giving participants a long time to accumulate funds. Now clergy are entering around 40 years of age with less time to accumulate funds. Fr. John Kreta has received a letter stating that not every clergyman in the DNE is on the plan.

## 15. OLD BUSINESS

- A. 46th Diocesan Assembly – October 23-24, 2009: Fr. Dennis said everything is on schedule. We actually have two speakers Metropolitan JONAH and Fr. Meletios Webber have both accepted our request.
- B. Holy Resurrection, Berlin, NH – Wanted a loan from the diocese of \$10,000 for repairs to the church and rectory. Bp. NIKON approved a grant up to \$3000 but the parish raised the funds themselves and sent photos of the improvements.

## 16. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Visitation Ministries Department of the OCA - Fr. Steven Voytovich requested to make a presentation on behalf of the Visitation Ministries Department at the 45<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Assembly. They will be placed on the agenda.
- B. Fr. Mark Sherman requested that a US Census taker from his parish be allowed to speak at the Diocesan Assembly about transient persons and the census. They will be placed on the agenda.
- C. Fr. Peter Carmichael requested that the minutes of the Diocesan Council be sent to all clergy in the diocese. It was stated that the minutes are posted on the diocesan website after they are approved by the council. Current minutes are only a draft until they are approved.

## NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Diocesan Council is scheduled for Wednesday, August 26, 2009, 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 Marion Gulash, 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
5. Fr. Robert Arida, Metropolitan Council Clergy Representative and Dean of the Boston Deanery
6. Dn. John Zarras, Diocesan Metropolitan Council Lay Representative
7. Fr. Vladimir Aleandro, Dean of the Connecticut Deanery
8. Fr. Mark Sherman, Dean of Missions
9. Dn. Gregory Urin, Clergy-at-Large Representative
10. Fr. Dennis Rhodes, Clergy-at-Large Representative
11. Matushka Ann Sovyrda, Laity-at-Large Representative
12. George Ludko, Laity-at-Large Representative
13. Rosemary Delaney, Laity-at-Large Representative
14. John Barone, Laity-at-Large Representative
15. Marion Gulash, Auditor (Voting)
16. Matushka Cindy Voytovich, , Auditor (Non-Voting)
17. Protodeacon Paul Nimchek, ONE Stewards Financial Secretary
18. Gregory Shesko, OCA Pension Board Representative

**Members of the Diocesan Council excused for this Meeting:**

1. Tim Tassmer, Laity-at-Large Representative
2. Alexia Tassmer, Laity-at-Large Representative
3. Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, Director of Communications – Chairman, CER; ONE Newspaper/Webmaster
4. Fr. John Hopko, Diocesan Youth Director

**Members of the Diocesan Council absent for this Meeting:**

1. Fr. Andrew Tregubov, Dean of the Northern Deanery
2. Fr. Marc Vranes, Clergy-at-Large Representative
3. David Rodgers, Auditor (Non-Voting)

**Guest at the Diocesan Council Meeting:**

1. Fr. Steven Voytovich, Choir Directing Program