

# Orthodox Church in America – Diocese of New England

## Diocesan Council Minutes – Wednesday, November 19, 2008 – New Britain, Connecticut

### 1. OPENING

The regular meeting of the Diocesan Council held on Wednesday, November 19, 2008, at Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT, was opened at the end of Daily Vespers with the prayers for the Installation of the new Diocesan Council for 2009 at 7:05 p.m., by His Grace, Bishop NIKON, of Boston, New England and the Albanian Archdiocese. After the blessing of the new council everyone proceeded to the church hall where His Grace chaired the meeting.

### 2. REVIEW OF MINUTES

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

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

### 3. REVIEW OF DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY MINUTES

The Minutes of the 45<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Assembly held at Dormition of the Theotokos Church, Cumberland, RI in October 2008 were not ready to be presented. His Grace directed the Secretary to present them at the next meeting of the Diocesan Council.

### 4. HIERARCH'S REPORT

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

- At Syosset in the past the atmosphere was not conducive for the Holy Spirit to act, but at the All American Council was there and guided our church. To say the least, I am ecstatic with the choice of our new Metropolitan. Looking forward to the Diocese of New England meeting Metropolitan JONAH. He is the right man at the right time.
- Out of the Discretionary Fund His Grace asked to take \$600 as a stipend for 12 months for the web master, Fr. David Koles.

**MOTION:** George Ludko moved, seconded by Fr. Dennis Rhodes, to give \$600 from the Discretionary Fund to the web master for 12 months. Motion passed.

- Diocesan Membership: Rather than sending another letter His Grace has designed a form similar to one used in other diocese with the metrical statistics and communicants to be used to determine fair share numbers.
- Will invite Metropolitan JONAH to Youth Rally 2009. Looking forward to meeting with His Beatitude for dinner on December 15. Bp. NIKON will attend the installation of Metropolitan JONAH on December 27-28 and the Holy Synod meeting on December 29, but will not be attending the installation of Bishop ALEJO as Bishop of the Diocese of Mexico in February.
- Will be going to Colorado Springs/Boulder, CO in late February for a combination retreat/strategic planning gathering of all the hierarchs of the OCA.

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek asked about tithing according to parish income and asked His Grace if we could put on the statistical form the last 3 years of income so that budget committee could begin to calculate the difference between the current 'fare share' and a 'tithing' system.

Fr. Andre Tregubov stated that the "head tax" / 'fare share' is 7-1/2% of their parish budget. He asked if his parish could switch to proportional giving from the 'fare share' and would give 8% to the diocese in 2009 and would increase 1/2% each year after.

Fr. John Hopko stated that as a diocese we could not switch to proportional giving easily since each parish calculated their budget differently. There is the possibility of parishes 'fudging' on their figures. When you state that you will give 10%, what is that based upon?

Fr. Mark Sherman believes that we will never get all our parishes or people to tithe. He stated that 62% of the DNE budget goes to the national church. His parish, Salem, MA, gives 13% of its budget to the DNE/OCA. He asked if the Evangelization Committee could study the budgets of our parishes and the needs of the DNE. His Grace thought this would be a good start.

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek said that he was around when ‘fare share’ was implemented and it was to be used as a guide for giving by the parish. Parishes were encouraged to give more if they could. No one has ever done so. Fr. John Kreta stated that Fr. Andrew Tregubov and his parish could do what ever they wanted as far as sending funds to the diocese. Each parish is free to decide ‘how’ they give. They can not give less than required but ‘how’ they come up with the funds is up to the individual parish. Fr. Steven Voytovich stated that the basic principle of stewardship is “voluntary giving”. It must not be compelled or stated as ‘a minimum’ otherwise it is a head tax.

5. 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 November 20, 2008. He noted that income is slightly ahead of projected because some parishes have ‘caught up’ on their Fare Share. Also, \$7000 was added under Rental Income, taken from the sale of the residence, to offset additional expenses before the sale of the property. On the expense side both the Diocesan Assembly and the diocesan residence are over budget, \$1704 and \$2370 respectively.

Financial Statement of Assets - 11/20/2008

Checkbook Balance	\$ 9,017.95
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Diocesan Budget: 9/1/2008 – 11/20/2008

Total Actual Budget Income (Inflows)	\$ 317,264.67
Total Actual Budget Expenses (Outflows)	\$ 299,506.34
Total Income/Expense (Net Total)	\$ 26,776.28

Peter stated that a Treasury bill would be purchased next week with the funds from the sales of the diocesan residence. It would be a 6 month T-bill at approximately 1% interest. George Ludko asked if we could change from a T-bill to a CD. At this time CD’s are earning over 4% in interest.

**MOTION:** Fr. Mark Sherman moved, seconded by George Ludko, that the Finance Committee be given the discretion to find a better rate of interest, being mindful of the safety of the investment, for the funds from the sale of the diocesan residence. Motion passed

**MOTION:** Fr. Dennis Rhodes moved, seconded by Prdn. Paul Nimchek, that the Treasurer’s Report be accepted as presented. The motion passed.

6. DIOCESAN RESIDENCE

Done! This item will now be removed from the agenda.

7. CHOIR DIRECTOR TRAINING PROGRAM

No report at this time.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

Latest issue of ONE has gone out with an error.

9. ONE STEWARDS

Prdn. Paul Nimchek stated that between September through December an additional \$2500 to \$3000 will be added. In January the next planning meeting will take place. The ‘Bishop’s Circle’ luncheon took place at Old Sturbridge Village on November 1.

10. METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Fr. Robert Arida, new MC clergy representative, stated that a brief meeting was held at the All American Council. Fr. Michael Tassos, OCA Treasurer, is finalizing the national assessment at \$105. When the Metropolitan travels the ‘entourage’ will be smaller than in the past. It was noted at the meeting by Fr. Michael Oleksa that most of the clergy in Alaska are under the poverty level but the Diocese of Alaska tithes to the OCA. The Strategic Planning Committee is in the process of being formed. Their focus will be on the Central Church and Diocese, What is the relationship of the Metropolitan with the Diocesan Bishop, and What is primacy?

11. DEAN OF MISSIONS

Fr. Mark Sherman, Dean of Missions, stated that one mission is in the process of paying its back fare share. This will take some time but progress is being made. The Mission Station in Maine has found a location in Belfast, ME at a Baptist Church. There are approximately 14 adults. Would like a patron. They have access to signage so a name might be a visible sign of stability. Mission Appeal money has yet to make it back to the diocese. The monies give through the Mission Appeal are distributed through "Planning Grants". But many of our missions don't meet their criterion therefore no money. Fr. Mark will be in contact with the Department of Evangelization to see what may be available to service this area. Fr. John Hopko asked where is the responsibility for missions located. Is it with the diocese or with the national church? He said that the statute gives the diocesan bishop the responsibility for missions not the primate or the national church.

12. YOUTH

Fr. John Hopko, Youth Director of the Diocese, stated that he went to UConn for an event sponsored by the OCF "Grill the Christian". He was one of three clergy people on a panel. The questions asked were of high quality. Next gathering will be on December 2. Troubles with the 'camp' where Rally is held. Between now and February we will be looking into other places to hold Rally because of the terrible mess that was left at the camp before Rally. Will contact them first to see if things can be worked out.

13. SCHOLARSHIP

Peter Kopcha stated that 4 scholarships have been given out this year. One student is at Holy Cross, Brookline, MA and three are at St. Vladimir's.

14. TASK FORCE

Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, Chairman of the Committee for Evangelization and Revitalization (CER) reported that he is in the process of finishing his training for the Natural Church Development program. He will then become a teacher for this program. At this time Christ the Savior, Southbury, CT is using this program. Soon 'St. Mary's' Waterbury, CT will also try this.

15. PENSION BOARD

Fr. John Hopko was elected and Greg Shesko was re-elected to the Pension Board at the All American Council. The organizational meeting will be held on December 16 where both old and new members will gather. Only two 'old timers' were able to continue on the board, David Drillock and Greg Shesko.

16. FORCC (Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in Connecticut)

Fr. Vladimir Aleandro stated that the next meeting will be on November 26, 2008.siblings.

17. OLD BUSINESS

46<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Assembly – October 23-24, 2009: Possible speaker, Metropolitan JONAH.

18. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Information on Incorporation & By-laws: Fr. David Koles reported that the DNE is incorporated with the Secretary of State of Connecticut and that we do have By-laws and also Rule of Procedure.
- B. Financial/Investment Committee: Names were suggested as to who would be qualified to be members of the newly formed committee. Peter Kopcha, Diocesan Treasurer, will be the committee chairman. Two names were suggested as potential members, Thomas Wood, Treasurer of SS. Cyril & Methodius Church, Terryville and Nicholas Carter, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston, MA.
- C. Loan request from Holy Resurrection, Berlin, NH: Fr. Andrew Tregobov, Dean of the Northern Deanery, stated that Berlin may not need the loan at this time, but he wondered what are the diocesan parameters and procedures for such loans. Bp. NIKON asked what if a parish defaults on a loan. If three parishes need monies how do you divide up the 'pie'? What about the status of the place, parish? mission? and what does that mean for repayment? Mat. Ann Sovyrda stated that one parishioner has given \$15,000 to the project.  
**MOTION:** Fr. Andrew Tregobov moved, Timothy Tassmer seconded, to give as a grant from the Discretionary Fund \$3000 to the parish of Holy Resurrection, Berlin, NH for needs in re-building the parish rectory. Motion passed.

- D. Clergy Compensation Guidelines: Fr. John Kreta recommends that he find the “old guide” and that we speak about this at our February meeting. This was agreeable to all.

#### NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Diocesan Council is scheduled for Wednesday, February 18, 2009, (snow date: February 25, 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 Fr. Robert Arida, 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. Fr. Vladimir Aleandro, Dean of the Connecticut Deanery
7. Fr. Andrew Tregubov, Dean of the Northern Deanery
8. Fr. Mark Sherman, Dean of Missions
9. Fr. Jason Vansuch, Clergy-at-Large Representative
10. Fr. Dennis Rhodes, Clergy-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. Rosemary Delaney, Laity-at-Large Representative
16. John Barone, Laity-at-Large Representative
17. Marion Gulash, Auditor (Voting)
18. Protodeacon Paul Nimchek, ONE Stewards Financial Secretary
19. Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, Director of Communications – Chairman, Membership Task Force, ONE Newspaper/Webmaster
20. Fr. John Hopko, Diocesan Youth Director
21. Gregory Shesko, OCA Pension Board Representative

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

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

1. Dn. John Zarras, Diocesan Metropolitan Council Lay Representative
2. Fr. Marc Vranes, Clergy-at-Large Representative
3. Matushka Cindy Voytovich, Auditor (Non-Voting)
4. David Rodgers, Auditor (Non-Voting)