

O.N.E.

ORTHODOX NEW ENGLAND

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Right: Archbishop Nikon blesses those elected to diocesan offices at the **51st Diocesan Assembly**.
All photos from the Assembly: John Barone



Notes from a Lively Assembly

Rev. Joshua Mosher

The 51st Diocesan Assembly was hosted Oct. 24–25, 2014, by Dormition of the Virgin Mary, Cumberland R.I. This year, we welcomed as guests Fr. Joseph Gallick of the Albanian Archdiocese; Fr. Alexander Rentel, professor at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, who would speak on revisions to the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) Statute; and Cindy Davis and Subdeacon William Brendan of the OCA Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allega-

tions (ORSMA), who would be explaining the Policies, Standards, and Procedures of the OCA on Sexual Misconduct. In addition, the diocese needed to address its own ongoing life. The weekend's agenda was packed.

After the opening service of thanksgiving, His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon delivered his report. He began by reflecting that all of us are servants of Christ. Our mission is to bring Christ "to a world that is yearn-

Assembly to 9

A “Walk to Break the Silence of Ovarian Cancer”

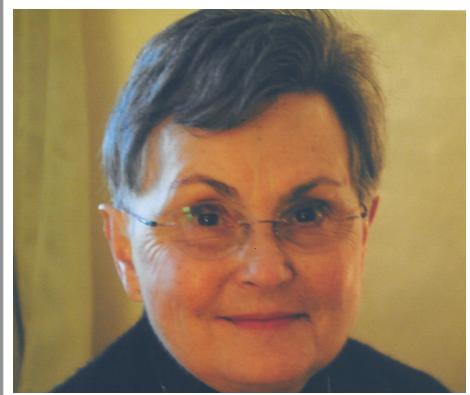
John Kriniske

On Saturday, September 20, 2014, family, friends, and members of Ss. Cyril & Methodius Orthodox church in Terryville, Conn., joined me, John (Jack) Kriniske, in walking to raise funds for Ovarian Cancer research in honor and memory of my wife Donna, who waged a courageous struggle to overcome this most devastating affliction.

The walk was sponsored by the Connecticut chapter of the NOCC (National Ovarian Cancer Coalition) which is focused on developing awareness of this disease as well as raising funds for research.

Our walking participants were actually broken up into two groups; our East Hartford, Conn., contingent of 17 walkers joining myself and our son Matthew as well as 35 friends and children joining our daughter Laura in Bolingbrook IL.

Through our combined efforts “Team Donna” raised \$4000 in con-



tributions to the overall monies raised of \$112,000 against a goal of \$109,000.

I would like to express a heartfelt “Thank You” to everyone who participated in this year’s NOCC Walk to Break the Silence of Ovarian Cancer. “Team Donna” was blessed to have so many caring and loving people who joined us in the walk and those who did not walk but made monetary donations locally and from around the country.

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Below left: Nina Plekhanov with godparents and Father Barnabas Fravel.

Below right: Alexandra takes her first communion.

Photos: Steven Nikitas

Right: After Divine Liturgy on Oct. 19 at St. Mark of Ephesus, Kingston, Mass.

Pictured from left to right are **V. Rev. Mark Sherman, Rev. James Robinson and V. Rev. John Bacon.**

The community gathered together for a panikida service for the newly departed Alexandra Kulinyi from Brick, NJ.

Father Sherman and Father Bacon both were involved in the early formation of St. Mark's Mission.

Photos: Laura Geigle

St. Nicholas, Pittsfield, Mass.

Steven Nikitas

St. Nicholas in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, continues to thrive after construction of our newtemple in 2012.

We recently welcomed two children into St. Nicholas through the sacrament of Holy Baptism: Nina Plekhanov and Alexandra Leinbaugh-Chelukhova. May God grant them many years!

St. Nicholas also has been active in the community in the past few months, participating in five Third Thursday events in the downtown, and in the Ethnic Fair in July, selling pastries.

We also recently hosted the Russian Trio from New York City for a Saturday concert.

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Holy Resurrection, Berlin, NH to celebrate hundredth anniversary

Judith Orth

The parish of Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church in Berlin, New Hampshire will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2015. The church was founded and built in 1915 by Orthodox Christians primarily from the Minsk, Wolensk and Grodnensk provinces of pre-war Russia (now Belarus). Work started on the church and rectory in May, 1915, and was completed on October 1, 1915. The church was dedicated on October 10, 1915, by His Eminence Archbishop Evodokim Mechevsky, and a corner stone laying ceremony was held.

The church is now a parish of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), and the parishioners are overjoyed to welcome our new priest, Rev. Fr. John Pawelchak.

The church will be holding fund-raising events throughout the year to pay for exterior re-painting and renovations. A celebration of the 100th Anniversary will be held next September 19, 2015, at the Town & Coun-



try Resort in Shelburne, New Hampshire.

For more information on the church's hundredth anniversary, please email the church at holyreurrectionberlin@gmail.com or call 603-752-2254.

Also, please see our website: www.hrocberlin.org and Facebook page: www.facebook.com/hrocberlin

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Orthodox Christians in Hartford, Bridgeport participate in “Forty Days for Life”

All Saints Church, Hartford, took part in the 40 Days for Life in Hartford on Oct. 31, 6 AM to 3 PM. This was not a protest but a forty day

prayer vigil at a traffic circle near an abortion clinic.

Under the leadership of Fr. James Parnell, members of the parish prayed

Above: Members of All Saints Church, Hartford, participate in 40 Days for Life on Oct. 31.

Below Left and Right: Orthodox Christians in Bridgeport participate in 40 Days for Life on Oct. 16.



throughout the day. They also held signs to explain their purpose of praying for an end to abortion.

Orthodox Christians in Bridgeport also participated in 40 Days for Life. They gathered on Oct. 16 near an abortion facility (which was closed at the time).

Rich Kendall, who organ-



ized the local effort, wrote, "This campaign is part of a large, international effort to end legalized abortion through the means of a prayerful, non-confrontational presence in front of abortion mills and Planned Parenthood facilities."

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Connecticut Bible Lecture Series announces major transition

Retiring Fr. Paul Tarazi limits role

V. Rev. Vladimir Aleandro

Connecticut Bible
Lecture Series - Octo-
ber 11, 2014

As I put away the roster from today's CBLS (Connecticut Bible Lecture Series), I am in awe of so great a diversity from a small group. October 11, 2014 also marks a new chapter in the life of Fr Paul Tarazi and the vision of CBLS. This is the fourteenth time for this series in Southbury, Connecticut, which began eight years ago with the mission statement coined by Fr Deacon John Zarras: "Making the scholarly study of the Bible accessible to everyone." Fr. Paul, through the



CBLS, has faithfully offered a systematic study of scripture each Spring and Fall for these eight years. The grant from the New England Diocese this year made possible the in-depth study of The Acts of The Apostles in May.

The second part was continued this October.

Two years ago, when private funding for this important work ceased, the Diocesan Grant Program made it possible for it to stay on schedule. Today, at the end of the last talk, it was announced that Fr Paul Tarazi is retir-

Right and Below:
Archbishop Nikon visited **St. Peter and St. Paul Church**, Springfield, Mass., on Nov. 30. There he gave awards to Fr. Michael Korolev and several parishioners for their service to the church.

Photos: John Barone



ing, but with a promise that he will return once a year to continue feeding us on the Word of God.

The roster this year reflects people from five Orthodox parishes of three jurisdictions. There were people here from two Roman Catholic churches, the faithful little group of Episcopalians, and Bishop Edmund and his wife from the Anglican Church. Bishop Edmund and Ahmsa have not missed a session in four years. Because of the exposure received through CBLS they, like others, have come for St. Nectarios Night and other occasions here. At lunch, it was wonderful to hear the fellowship taking place between this beautiful diverse group of people who have one thing in common – the desire to learn and grow in the Lord through the study of Scripture in this Orthodox setting.

Right: Archbishop Nikon took time during the St. Nectarios Celebration, Nov. 8, at Christ the Savior Church, Southbury, Conn., to grant Fr. Sergius Halvorsen awards, including a **gold cross**.

Below: Archbishop Nikon reads the Gospel at Vespers for the celebration of **St. Nectarios**. See the photo gallery on the next page.



On behalf of the group this October 11th, and all who have participated during the past thirteen sessions, I thank the Diocese of New England for a very wise investment.

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St. Nectarios celebration, Christ the Savior, Southbury, Conn.

Assembly in Rhode Island from I

ing and searching. In Orthodoxy, our search is fulfilled in a lifelong relationship with Christ and obedience to Christ's commandments."

He recalled how someone asked Archbishop Dmitri of blessed memory, "You want people to change our whole lifestyle?" He simply answered yes.

Archbishop Nikon reported on the Assembly of Canonical Bishops in America, which is helping to prepare for a Great Council in Constantinople in 2016. In their last meeting, they considered many Orthodox ministries in America. He highlighted one report that, of ten orthodox youth, six have never returned to an Orthodox church after leaving for college. "We have to ascertain what we are doing wrong and what we can do to strengthen the Christian faith of young people," he said.

His Eminence spoke on the two times he was invited to join Archbishop Anastasios of Albania. He attended the awarding of an honorary doctorate to Archbishop Anatarios in January. There the head of the Church in Albania gave a speech on sharing the good news in a multicultural world. Archbishop Nikon was also invited to attend the consecration of the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Tirana, Albania. [Read more in the previous issue of the ONE.] He noted that he was aided by Fr. John Parker, who was a speaker at last year's Diocesan Assembly. At that time, he asked the blessing of the Ecumenical Patriarch to visit Constantinople. Instead, he was given a ride in Patriarch Bartholomew's private jet, a private audi-

Right: Fr. Vladimir Aleandro gives a presentation at the Assembly



ence, and a chance to venerate the icon of Unwedded Bride, the only example of Theotokos all in white. (His Eminence wondered when he would get his private jet!)

Archbishop Nikon turned to the Holy Synod. He observed that the Midwest, the South and Canada have no local hierarchs. The Midwest and Canada each have elected a candidate. We hope to have a nomination in the South in February, after which the Synod could elect the nominee in March. Archbishop Nikon said that would mean his responsibility in the South would end by the All American Council in July.

Among other topics, His Eminence spoke on the sorrow of closing the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin in Chelsea, Mass. He was glad that it continues to be used by a local Romanian mission. He said that many other Christian communities are struggling with the difficult task of closing churches that are no longer viable. But he continues to hold the conviction that "the gates of hell will

not prevail against the Church Christ has founded."

Archbishop Nikon acknowledged the work and dedication of so many leaders in our diocese, and especially thanked the chancellor and deans. He then closed with a reflection from Ignatios IV, Patriarch of Antioch: "We no longer belong to ourselves. We belong to Christ. This is not a matter of some legal contract or moral ideal; it is a mysterious and spiritual reality which encompasses our whole being: mind, soul, and spirit."

The full report of our Archbishop is available at our Diocese of New England website: dneoca.org.

Revision of the OCA Statute

Fr. Alexander Rentel then delivered a presentation on the work of the Statute Revision task force. He explained how the Statute applies the Christian Faith and the Canons of the Church to our contemporary situation. It also reflects our legal responsibilities to the United States and the State of New York, where the OCA is incorporated.



Fr. Rentel pointed out that there has been no comprehensive review of the Statute since 1971. There also are gaps: it has little to say about monasteries, seminaries, or diocesan institutions.

The current task force began as a working committee, formed by the direction of the All-American Council (AAC) in Toronto, in 2005. Shortly after Toronto, Fr. Rentel observed, the OCA entered into a "time of troubles" involving three hierarchs stepping down in quick succession. During that chaotic period, there was no possibility of revision, though the many disputes made clear the need for it.

In 2014, the revision task force received new guidelines:

- 1) Be as transparent as possible. The task force is not trying to force anything though.
- 2) The draft revision is to be formally reviewed by the synod, dioceses, and sexual misconduct committees.
- 3) The resulting work could then be presented online for wider examination and re-



Right: Vespers closed the business of the first day of the Assembly.



sponse.

4) Each stage would require strict timelines for comment, in order to present finally at the AAC next July.

Fr. Rentel described many of the concerns being addressed in the Statute revision. He acknowledged that progress has been slow. The task force reflects very different perspectives, and they need to wrestle through each issue. They have met with assemblies, diocesan clergy meetings, the Synod and Metropolitan Council, and will have a meeting involving seminary leaders in December.

New draft articles still need to be completed. The entire draft needs to be professionally copy edited. Then it will be reviewed by synod and offered to the whole church for review and comment.

After Fr. Rentel's presentation, we turned to questions. Archbishop Nikon asked if the hope is to have the AAC ratify without discussion there. Fr. Rentel answered that the task force hopes to give every opportunity for review *ahead of time* so there will be no need for further discussion in July.

Fr. John Kreta, diocesan chancellor, raised the issue that the original timeline had a draft ready now so we could talk through whole text. Fr. Rentel made clear that the revision

will not be submitted for ratification if not reviewed properly by whole church. "It's better to have good statute than a hurried statute pushed through," he said.

Reports

The Assembly next received a number of reports from deans and

ministries of the diocese. The Northern Deanery announced a major change: Fr. Sergius Gerkin had to transfer from Holy Resurrection, N.H., to a parish in Florida due to health issues. Starting November, Fr. John Pawelchak will be on a trial basis serving both Berlin, N.H., and Bangor, Maine.

We heard an extensive report from our delegates to the Metropolitan Council. Among many points, we heard concern that the OCA—despite being the second-largest Orthodox jurisdiction—has no representation on the executive committee of the Assembly of Canonical Bishops in America. Seminaries are struggling with funding, and the Church is considering creative solutions. The OCA has a balanced budget for 2014 and 2015, despite assessments being reduced to \$90 per person. And lastly, 70% of military chaplains belong to the OCA; their funding is negligible and they need greater support. The full report is available our Diocese of New England website: dneoca.org.

We heard good news from Proto-deacon Paul Nimchek regarding ONE Stewards. We surpassed our goal this year, thanks in large part to Archbishop Nikon, who gives \$500 each

month! His Eminence was able to gather with the Bishop's Circle recently—those who have given \$500 or more. He gave each a Christmas ornament in thanks. A number of parishes also gave significantly. There is a new category of anonymous donors. Pdn. Nimchek thanked these generous individuals.

Each of the parish recipients of Diocesan Grants gave a report to the Assembly. St. Alexis Church, Clinton, Conn., has contributed to a Community Garden. This year, they raised 6000 pounds of produce, which was used to feed the hungry. They expanded significantly this year, using the grant to increase acreage and install a new irrigation system. Now they also have a petting zoo for local elder home and elementary school. Six churches are volunteering.

Three Saints, Ansonia, Conn., runs a Vacation Church School at Three Saints Park. This year, the theme was parables. They hold morning and evening prayers, with children responsible for the reading and singing. In addition to plenty of time for fun, they have an activity for the day after teaching on the week's theme. The parents join in for the end of the week with vespers, for which the children practiced to serve as the choir. Afterward they hold a cook-out, observing the Friday fast.

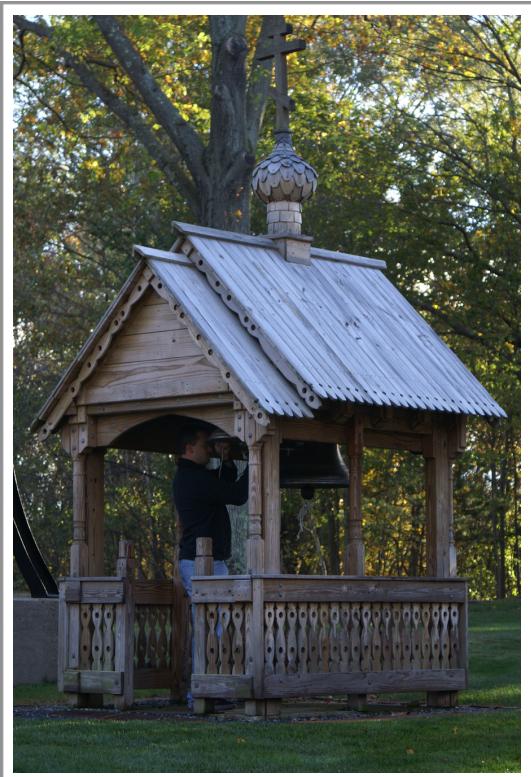
Christ the Savior Church, Southbury, Conn., uses the grant to support the Connecticut Bible Lecture Series. Its goal is "making the Bible accessible to all people." They have two events a year with Fr. Paul Tarazi. Participants have come from five Orthodox parishes, in addition to many non-Orthodox.

Youth Director Fr. John Hopko spoke on Youth Ministry. He noted that he is not able to do more with

the role than Youth Rally. Attendance at Rally bounded back this year. He was grateful for volunteers giving vacation time to serve. The kids are glad to spend time with other Orthodox kids, where they don't have to explain themselves. "It's wonderful to just be who you are without explanation or excuse," Fr. Hopko said. A more extensive report on Youth Rally was published in the last issue of the ONE.

Sexual Misconduct Prevention

The Orthodox Church in America has responded to the threat of sexual misconduct and abuse with Policies, Standards, and Procedures on Sexual Misconduct (PSP). These have been revised several times, and in recent years, parish leadership have been expected to review and affirm the PSP. In terms of parish life, this means upholding standards on reporting mis-



conduct and, above all, providing a safe environment for children.

The details of the PSP have been more challenging to understand and apply, especially the question of background checks for those who have “more than incidental contact with minors.” In July 2014, the Holy Synod issued a revised set of guidelines which called for three levels of criminal background checks on a wide array of parish leaders. These guidelines, available at www.oca.org, have raised even more questions in the diocese. Therefore, Archbishop Nikon invited Cindy Davis and Subdeacon William Brendan of the OCA Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA), to explain and address concerns.

First, however, Richard Comshaw was permitted to make a short presentation on the relative effectiveness of different methods of preventing sexual abuse. Dr. Comshaw, of SS. Peter & Paul, Meriden, Conn., is a psychiatrist who also has experience performing background checks for his fire department.

In reviewing the research worldwide, he found the best study was from the Anglican Church of Australia, which studied rates of abuse over 18 years. They found that the vast majority of such cases came from or-

Above: Richard Comshaw reports on studies of sexual abuse in churches.

Below left and right: William Brendan and Cindy Davis, speaking on the guidance from ORSMA on preventing sexual misconduct and abuse.



dained clergy, and only 3.8% from lay leaders on church premises.

Examining the patterns of clergy guilty of abuse, Dr. Comshaw reported they did not exhibit high use of pornography, chronic abuse, or other things that would show up on criminal background checks.

Dr. Comshaw reported that other practices have a demonstrable deterrent effect: creating a safe environment in the parish; observing the “two person rule,” especially in cars, is necessary.

He concluded that the true costs and benefits of background checks have not been demonstrated. Just 0.3 percent across all checks in all fields is an actual hit.

Cindy Davis then introduced herself and began the ORSMA presentation. She said the PSP apply “to those in authority or *perceived authority*:



Right: Archbishop Nikon presides at the Divine Liturgy for the Assembly.



Clergy, minor orders, choir directors, altar servers, teachers, camp counselors. By contrast, “incidental contact” with minors would be attending services or coffee hour.

The first step in screening out potential sexual abusers is the youth worker application packet. Even filling it out weeds out certain predators, Cindy Davis stated. The parish then follows up, checking references.

The next level is the criminal background check. Single Source Services is the recommended company. In addition, there needs to be training in child safety and prevention. The Boy Scouts of America program which the diocese has been using is fine, she acknowledged. “Darkness to Light” is recommended, as it is more extensive.

Who needs a criminal background check? Clergy of all orders and youth volunteers. It is strongly recommended for any paid employee.

Parish council members, choir directors, greeters, other leadership positions are not yet required, but strongly recommended.

Subdeacon William Brendan then spoke. Mr. Brendan is a former chief of police at Los Angeles Airport. He also spent significant time in internal investigation in the police. As a volunteer for ORSMA, he finds a parallel to clergy misconduct. Both need to root out abuse and clear the names of the falsely accused.

“The goal is protection,” Mr. Brendan said. We need to exercise due diligence. We have the criminal checks to provide the paper trail, when a court asks the Church what we did to prevent sexual abuse. He was skeptical of Dr. Comshaw’s presentation, arguing that these checks do provide important deterrence. He cited a recent case where a check would have identified a sexual abuser in the OCA. Someone was seeking ordination who had a track record of abuse. He later detailed that the individual was known by his priest and other parish leaders to have committed abuse in the past, but was nevertheless trusted and esteemed; only when a new rector



Right: M. Cindy Voytovich chaired the second day of the Assembly. Chancellor Fr. John Kreta and Archbishop Nikon sit nearby.

learned his history was the person reported to ORSMA.

Mr. Brendan said the Church should track someone's background for many years, wherever they have lived. The challenge is how to actually discern wheat from chaff in check results. It is better to rely on expertise when there are questions.

After the presentation, a lengthy discussion ensued. Some made analogies to the public school system, where criminal background checks are the norm. Many were concerned at the sweeping nature of these guidelines. The people ORSMA expects to have background checks quickly would include every active member of a typical parish. ORSMA is focused on their assigned problem, sexual misconduct, but parishes have limited resources and many are struggling with membership. Many still had doubts about the benefits of extensive background checks for laypeople.

Archbishop Nikon has been considering carefully with the Diocesan Council how to implement the PSP at a diocesan level, and the members of ORSMA promised to bring these issues back for more reflection at the national level.

Worship and Fellowship

After this intense day, the Assembly had opportunity for refreshment.

We celebrated Vespers at the Church of the Dormition and then enjoyed a convivial evening meal. In the morning, we came together for Divine Liturgy. It is a distinctive blessing for representatives of the entire diocese to be united in partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Third Plenary Session

After a luncheon on Saturday, we turned to the final business of the Assembly. Diocesan treasurer John Skrobat reported that the diocesan budget saw a \$34,000 net gain! Parishes actually gave more to the diocese than budgeted (mainly because some were catching up on their Fair Share). We held elections for several positions in the diocese, and then turned to the question of church property in Chelsea, Mass. After the dissolution of the parish there, all property was entrusted to the diocese. We have an offer from a Romanian mission to purchase church, at about half the asking price. It was clear that the Assembly would gladly sell the church to support an Orthodox mission, but there was uncertainty about the intended use of the rectory. Was the rectory to benefit an individual or the mission? After more discussion, a resolution was approved to authorize the diocesan council to approve a sale on either the church or rectory.

In conclusion, we thanked Fr. Vasily Lickwar and the members of Holy Dormition for their hospitality. The newly elected Diocesan Council was blessed, and we prayerfully adjourned until the next Assembly at Holy Trinity, Willimantic, Conn., in 2015.

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Upcoming Events

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| Jan 30 | Deadline for the next issue of the ONE |
| Jan 30 | Fr. Alexander Schmemann Lecture at St. Vladimir's Seminary, at 7 PM. Bishop Nicholas of the Antiochian Archdiocese will speak on the Life of St. Raphael of Brooklyn. |
| Feb 23 | Great Lent begins |
| Apr 12 | Pascha |
| Sept 19 | Holy Resurrection, Berlin, N.H., celebrates 100th Anniversary |
| Sept 27 | Holy Transfiguration, New Haven, celebrates 100th Anniversary |