

The 48th Annual Assembly of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania **Saturday, December 3rd, 2011**

Holy Cross Orthodox Church, Williamsport, Pennsylvania

Opening Prayer

The Assembly began in the nave of the church at 11:25 AM with the singing of *O Heavenly King*. His Grace, Bishop TIKHON, declared the 48th Diocesan Assembly open.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was presented and a suggestion was put forth by Bishop Tikhon that it be adjusted, swapping the order of the administration reports and the revitalization presentation. Fr. David Shewczyk moved that the agenda be changed as per Bishop Tikhon's suggestion. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Election of Officers

His Grace presented a slate of Diocesan Assembly officers as nominated during the Diocesan Council meeting of November 15, 2011:

Clergy Chair: Fr. John Kowalczyk

Lay Chair: Douglas Yates, St. Mark Church, Wrightstown

Clergy Secretary: Fr. Jason Franchak

Lay Secretary: Kimberly Metz, St. Nicholas Church, Bethlehem

David Yeosock of Holy Resurrection Cathedral, Wilkes-Barre, moved to elect the slate of officers as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Opening Remarks and Approval of Minutes

Opening remarks were given by our Chancellor, Fr. Kowalczyk. Fr. Kowalczyk offered congratulations to Bishop Tikhon on his six years as our Diocesan Hierarch.

Fr. Kowalczyk requested that the the 2010 Diocesan Assembly minutes be accepted as they appeared online. Fr. David Mahaffey moved to accept the 2010 minutes as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Report of the Diocesan Hierarch

In His opening remarks, His Grace recounted six stories, three tragic and three hopeful. The first two stories (the lyrics of Jimi Hendrix's *Hey Joe* versus the story of the Titanic) described a tragic internal struggle versus a tragic external struggle. The next two stories were about the life of St. Mary of Egypt and her hopeful internal struggle, and in contrast the hopeful external struggle of the Apostles in preaching the Risen Lord. The last two stories were about The Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania and its own unique internal and external struggles. His Grace concluded with a call to committing ourselves as a Diocese to revitalize.

Credentials Report

Fr. John Onofrey offered the following credentials for the 48th Annual Diocesan Assembly:

1 Hierarchy
27 Clergy Delegates
14 Lay Delegates
8 Lay Alternates
3 Diocesan Council Members
1 Metropolitan Council Member
3 Observers
2 Guests
55 Total Eligible Voters

Bishop Tikhon asked for any questions from the floor. Fr. Onofrey had a question concerning the All-American Council recently held in Seattle, WA. His question was dealing with the substance and leadership of the AAC and whether it had an impact for change. His Grace commented that while actions do take place at the AAC, this particular council was not a radical one. Fr. Onofrey again questioned the long-term impact of the 2011 AAC and its ability to move forward. His Grace responded that our primary concern at this time should be to move forward as a Diocese and to focus on Diocesan and parish development.

Fr. Dennis Swencki requested that the Bishop be given a larger budget to hire a full-time communications assistant and a full-time personal assistant. His Grace commented that those positions and the budget goals to accommodate them will be fulfilled over the next five years, and that it does not have to be accomplished this year. His Grace also pointed out that Matushka Sandy Kopestonsky, Administrative Assistant, and Cindy Davis, Director of Communications, complete many more hours of work than they record. Fr. Dennis Swencki was hopeful that we would increase the budget by one-fifth each year over the next five years so that by 2017, the salaries for these positions, as well as the Bishop's, can be higher than minimum wage.

Fr. Mahaffey commented that in 2013 and 2014 the national assessment going to the Central Administration would drop so that more money could stay in the Diocese. Bishop Tikhon said that the Central Administration would still need the same amount of money to operate, and the problem would still return to the Diocese in the end. David Yeosock commented that Melanie Ringa, the OCA's Treasurer, will be meeting with all of the Diocesan Treasurers to try to come up with a plan to meet the demand of that resolution. His Grace reminded everyone that regardless of the funding of the central Church, we as a Diocese will do the work and we have to accomplish it by revitalizing the Diocese. There were no further questions.

Report of the Diocesan Chancellor

Fr. Kowalczyk shared that the full text of the Chancellor's report was available online. He reminded everyone that the Revitalization Committee's work is a paradigm shift for the Diocese and that we are here to save souls and grow the Diocese. John Malinchok moved to approve the Chancellor's report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Report of the Diocesan Deans

Wilkes-Barre Deanery

Fr. Daniel Kovalak, Dean, stated that his report was available online. He commented on administrative issues in the Diocese, saying that he felt part of the reason why we cannot get a jump start on

revitalization is because we are crippled by too much administrative work that is not yet in order – namely paperwork and bylaws.

Philadelphia Deanery

Fr. David Mahaffey, Dean, stated that his report was available online. He commented that there is much activity in the Philadelphia Deanery. He shared that Fr. Steve Miller is the new priest in charge at St. Nicholas Church in Coatesville, that Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk has been successful with the mission to the Russian immigrants at St. Stephen's Cathedral, and that Fr. Franchak has done a wonderful job of attracting 19 new parishioners to Holy Trinity in Pottstown.

Frackville Deanery

Fr. Michael Hatrak, Dean, stated that his report was posted online and that they continued to enjoy various activities throughout the year.

Fr. Michael Evans moved to accept the Deanery Reports. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Report of the Diocesan Treasurer

Fr. Martin Browne stated that the Treasurer's report was online and shared that at the time that his report was posted, nothing had happened regarding the purchase of the Diocesan Center. However, since then, there was a meeting between principals of the Diocese, the Monastery, the Seminary, and the Orphanage Board to come to an agreement on the lines for who would take which land. The Diocese is in the process of acquiring the land where the Diocesan Center is located.

Fr. Steven Vernak asked about our Diocese's move toward proportional giving in light of what the Central Administration is asking. Fr. Browne said that the Diocese of the South's model would not necessarily work for us. He also said that there had been no communication from the Central Administration yet regarding a meeting of the Diocesan Treasurers, but that he had informed Melanie Ringa about the realities facing our Diocese. Fr. Nicholas Solak asked what was specifically discussed with Melanie Ringa. Fr. Browne responded that he spoke about the financial state of certain parishes in the diocese and their ability to pay assessments.

Fr. Swencki commented that the whole Church needs to be funded and the current system is inadequate. He also commented that the budget presented at the AAC did not present all of the pertinent information.

John Malinchok asked what solutions were available to help struggling parishes. Fr. Browne responded that currently, we bear each other's burdens. He felt that the real root of the issue with the financial issues facing our Diocese was related to a need to revitalize.

Fr. Swencki encouraged Fr. Browne to reconsider his resignation from the position of Diocesan Treasurer. His Grace lightheartedly commented that he has not accepted Fr. Browne's resignation, but in seriousness he understands that Fr. Browne does not have the time as a parish priest and father to continue the full-time work of a Treasurer.

Report of the Diocesan Auditing Committee

David Yeosock thanked Fr. Browne for all of his hard work and commented that Fr. Browne's accounting made his job easier. The committee held four audits this year and all receipts were in order.

Paul Berdy, CPA, of Kronick Kalada Berdy & Co. P.C., gave his report. This report was made available at the meeting. He focused on items that had changed from the prior year, noting that the reports are always done on a cash basis. He stated that this year the Diocese had a healthier balance - \$57,000 this year compared to last year's \$34,000. He noted that the funds from Saint Tikhon's Summer Camp program are new this year. Mr. Berdy also thanked Matushka Kathy Kowalczyk for keeping excellent records. He attributed the shrinking population to the decline in assessments but said that most expenses were in line with the prior year. He also said that there was a \$17,000 change in assets because of an increase in equity this year. There was no discussion.

Fr. James Jadick moved to accept the financial reports. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Metropolitan Council Report

Fr. Mahaffey presented this report detailing highlights of the Metropolitan Council meetings. The report was made available at the meeting. Fr. Onofrey asked if this year's audit was clean. Fr. Mahaffey responded that as a result of the Alaskan Lands being returned to Alaska, the Central Administration had a clean audit. Fr. Onofrey moved to accept the report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Diocesan Council Report

The report was available online. There was no discussion on the report. Fr. Adam Sexton moved to accept the report. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Review of Department Reports

Department of Communications Report

No official communications report was given; however, Bishop Tikhon commended Cindy Davis's work and shared that website hits on www.doepa.org have reached 5000-7000 visitors per month (200-300 per day). His Grace shared that we need to constantly reassess our communications and determine whether we still need the *Alive in Christ*, etc. He mentioned the good turnouts for both Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk's webcasts and Dr. Tristram Engelhardt's lectures.

The Assembly broke for lunch at 1:16 PM. The Assembly reconvened in the church hall at 1:58 PM. Doug Yates from St. Mark's Church, Wrightstown, chaired this part of the assembly.

Office of Church School Programs & Curriculum Report

Doug Yates shared that this report was available online. There was no discussion.

Office of Young Adult Activities Report

Nicholas Macura of St. Herman of Alaska, Gradyville, Tatiana Bohush of St. Nicholas, Philadelphia, and Kimberly Metz stated that their report was available online. They noted that in addition to their continuing Winter Retreat and Teen Camp programs, they have now taken over administration of St. Tikhon's Summer Camp as a whole. Fr. Onofrey commented on their good work and how much they have done for the youth of this Diocese.

Institutional Chaplains Report

Fr. Mahaffey stated that this report was available online. He shared that Fr. Timothy Hasenecz, who is in charge of the Lehigh Valley Health Network's "No One Dies Alone" hospice program and manages 37 chaplains, recently earned a national chaplaincy certification through the Association of Professional Chaplains. He also shared that Fr. James Chuta is now a prison chaplain.

Holy Apostles Mission Report

Fr. Hojnicky stated that his report was available online. He shared that the mission paid off its mortgage in October 2011 and is looking for a property. Dn. Seraphim Reynolds was ordained. Their new goal is to raise \$200,000 by Pascha 2013.

Russian Mission Report

Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk spoke about the Russian Program at St. Stephen's Cathedral. He shared that donations to the Cathedral to provide Liturgy in Slavonic to Russians living in our Diocese were very helpful. Fr. Nikolai Gulin celebrates a Liturgy every Sunday in Slavonic. They hope to be self-sufficient soon and are currently breaking even with Diocesan help. Personal attention is given to Russian speakers' children with the understanding that the next generation will be integrated into the life of English-speaking North American Orthodoxy.

Agia Sophia Coffeehouse Report

Fr. Stephen Vernak presented this report, stating that the Agia Sophia Coffeehouse has been open for the last three months. There are typical challenges, but they are being overcome. There has been much interaction with the public and as the result of one such interaction, Fr. Hojnicky will be giving a lecture at a local college. Fr. Vernak invited all to come and visit.

Revitalization Committee Report and Special Presentation

His Grace commented that there is important work being done by the Revitalization Committee. He thanked the members. Committee member Mark Linnehan of Holy Apostles Mission, Mechanicsburg, gave a presentation on the 8-part Parish Health Inventory Model that will be made available online to parishes in our Diocese to use as a tool for assessing parish health, identifying obstacles and opportunities, and establishing a framework for change. The model, borrowed from the Diocese of the Midwest, was presented to clergy of the Diocese at a recent retreat. Fr. Vernak thanked the committee and said that Harrisburg will be inviting them to discuss revitalization at Christ the Savior Church. Fr. Daniel Mathewson shared that he felt this would be an excellent tool for convincing our members that we are in decline. Mr. Larry Skvir of St. Stephen's Cathedral, Philadelphia, thanked Mark for being the face of the committee and suggested that by reading the Parish Health Inventory Model, lots of good ideas could be provoked.

Fr. Onofrey moved to accept all of the Departmental Reports. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Proposal of Budget for 2012

This report was given by Fr. Browne. He stated that this had been posted online with additional changes also listed online. He recommended a \$2 increase in the assessment, up from \$46 annually to \$48 annually for 2012.

Fr. John Onofrey moved to instead increase the assessment by \$12 and make it an even \$60, with the additional funds to be allocated as Bishop Tikhon and his administration would see fit, in an effort to

more strongly support the diocese. Discussion ensued.

Fr. Kovalak and Fr. Mahaffey spoke against raising the assessment by \$12. Mark Linnehan also opposed the motion. His Grace commented that the discussion about an increase was the same discussion that had happened at the AAC. Fr. Onofrey spoke about increasing the assessment to help our Bishop do his work and that it is the responsibility of our people to fund that work.

Fr. Browne commented that he felt the Diocese needs to maintain a close-to-current assessment level until we figure out a solid plan for what we need to do to reach our financial goals. He felt that the increase could be difficult for struggling parishes and that the benefits would not help much.

Fr. Mathewson commented that an increase would work better for the people because they do not understand tithing. Mark Linnehan suggested that we discontinue assessments altogether and keep our funding at current level through proportional giving.

Fr. Gorodenchuk reminded the Assembly that the parishes did not send their delegates to the Assembly to change the assessment, and recommended that this decision should not be made on such short notice.

Fr. Sexton shared that while he did not like the idea of an assessment in general, for the people of the Anthracite region, an increase in assessment would work better than proportional giving because they are not accustomed to the concept of tithing.

Fr. Kowalczyk responded that we need to give our people more credit and that we should consider the advice of senior priests when they say they feel the timing is not right. He suggested a 'careful watch' to see what happens on a national level first.

Harold Smith from St. Michael's Church, Mount Carmel, commented that parishes are facing problems and suggested that parishes help each other. Small parishes are assessed at higher levels than their membership currently is.

Fr. Theodore Heckman called for the motion on the floor to be voted on. The motion to increase the Diocesan assessment to \$60, a \$12 increase from the previous year, was voted on by a show of hands and failed to pass.

Fr. Kovalak moved to accept the budget as originally presented with a \$2 increase. The motion was seconded and passed with one abstention.

Discussion on the Funding of the Church

Mark Linnehan advised that our people need to be educated on proportional giving because we are transitioning to that system in 2018.

Fr. Browne suggested that cemetery bylaws be amended to allow non-members to be buried in the cemetery without penalty. That way, inactive members still on the books could be removed to reflect a more accurate parish count.

Old Business

His Grace said we need to have more administrative clarity and asked for 100% compliance with the requirements of the Diocese, particularly regarding submission of sexual compliance paperwork,

budget information, and parish bylaws.

Upcoming Events

His Grace will be concelebrating with ROCOR Hierarchs in February. The Winter Teen Retreat will be held on Feb 3-5 in Dalton, PA and Summer Camp will take place July 1-7 at St. Tikhon's. The 75th Anniversary of the Novogodny Ball will take place on January 15, 2012 and proceeds will go to IOCC. Fr. Michael Demko's teen group will participate in FOCUS North America in June. The Metropolitan Council will meet in February.

New Business

Fr. Browne stated that a location is needed for the next assembly. The Diocesan fiscal year will now be January 1 to December 31, so our next meeting will have to be in 2013. He suggested the date of January 19, 2013, for the next Assembly.

David Lezinsky requested a recap of the goals the Assembly met during today's meeting. He stated that the purpose of his question was because he feels unaccomplished after leaving these meetings each year. Bishop Tikhon responded that the most important items that had been accomplished during the meeting were that the assessment had been raised by \$2, that the Diocese had provided His Grace with a raise, and that in the coming year, our new focus should be on revitalization and the financial issues that face us.

Fr. Vernak reminded the Assembly that we all have the responsibility to take what was said during today's meeting, share it with our parishes, and apply it to our own parish lives.

Closing

Fr. Hojnicky moved to adjourn the 48th Annual Diocesan Assembly. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously with no abstentions.

The Assembly closed at 4:07 PM with the singing of *It is Truly Meet*.

Bishop Tikhon thanked everyone for their participation and thanked Holy Cross Church for hosting the Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Jason Franchak, Clergy Secretary
Ms. Kimberly Metz, Lay Secretary