

The Orthodox Church in America

Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Assembly – January 17 & 18, 2014

Friday, January 17th

The meeting was called to order and opened with the singing of “O Heavenly King.”

A message from Metropolitan +TIKHON was given by Fr. John Jillions.

- Many thanks to Bp. +MELCHISIDEK and Bp. +MARK for their tireless work.
- Thanks to the search committee for their diligent efforts.

Fr. John Kowalczyk, diocesan chancellor, reviewed the voting instructions. They were originally written in 1972 and have been modified to suit this one-candidate nomination vote.

- Plenary election
- Auditors vet delegate
- No speeches for or against the candidate
- Voting is by secret ballot
- The results are revealed by the Locum Tenens
- The candidate needs 2/3 of all votes to be officially nominated. If this does not happen, a second vote will be taken. If after two votes the candidate does not have the necessary votes, the Locum Tenens will declare the failure of the nominating election and the selection process will progress to the Holy Synod.

Mark Linnehan moved to officially present Bp. +MARK as a candidate. The motion was seconded from the floor. The motion passed.

There were several questions from the floor.

- John Kosturos asked for clarification regarding the candidate vetting process.
 - Bp. +MELCHISEDEK explained that there were originally two candidates: Bp. +MARK and a priest in Ohio. The priest declined the offer of candidacy.
- John Kosturos expressed concern that with no forum for discussion regarding Bp. +MARK’s candidacy, the delegates would not be able to make an educated decision.
 - Bp.+MELCHISEDEK explained that information about Bp. +MARK, along with his answers to questions posed by the search committee, were sent to the parishes so they could discuss the matter.
- Mark Linnehan made a brief procedural explanation regarding *nomination vs. election*. He explained that we are nominating Bp. +MARK as a candidate to be considered by the Holy Synod, not directly electing him as our diocesan hierarch.

- Jim O'Brien expressed concern about the pre-vetting of candidates and the fact that there is only one candidate.
 - Bp. +MELCHISEDEK explained that delegates who did not wish to vote for Bp. +Mark should submit blank ballots.
 - Two options: vote for Bp. +MARK or submit an empty ballot card. No other nominations accepted.

Fr. John Onofrey read the credentials:

- 23 clergy
- 27 lay delegates
- 3 members of the Diocesan Council
- 8 observers
- 53 TOTAL VOTES

Ballots were distributed and collected. They were placed in a chalice and carried into the altar for tabulation. During this time the assembly sang hymns.

Bp. +MELCHISEDEK revealed the BALLOT RESULTS:

- **40 votes for Bp. +MARK**
- **13 blank ballots**

Bp. +MELCHISEDEK led the assembled faithful in a Moleiben of thanksgiving. The session was adjourned after the singing of "It is truly meet."

Respectfully submitted,
Daria Cortese, lay secretary
Fr. Jason Franchak, clergy secretary

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Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Assembly – January 17 & 18, 2014

Saturday, January 18th

The meeting was called to order with the singing of “O Heavenly King” and an opening prayer led by Bp. +MELCHISIDEK.

Opening words were given by Fr. John Kowalczyk.

- Officers were named for the assembly. Fr. John will head the first session; Mark Linnehan will chair the second. The secretaries for both sessions will be Daria Cortese and Fr. Jason Franchak.
- Majority of reports were made available online.
- The agenda has been amended; the OCA Chancellor’s report will be given directly after the report of the Diocesan Chancellor.
 - A motion to accept the amended agenda was made by Fr. Steven Vernak and seconded from the floor. The motion passed.
- The motion to accept the minutes from the 2013 Assembly was made by Fr. David Shewczyk and seconded from the floor. The motion passed.

Credentials report was given by Fr. John Onofrey.

- 2 hierarchs
- 1 guest (Fr. John Jillions)
- 24 clergy delegates
- 30 lay delegates
- 4 Diocesan Council members
- 9 alternates/ observers
- A motion to accept the credentials was made by Ken Stafursky and seconded from the floor. The motion was accepted.

Message from Bp. + MELCHISEDEK, Locum Tenens

- PA has more than 80 OCA parishes; all are important. In the 20’s and 30’s, we had more than 130. We must examine this trend and learn how to reverse it.
- Many vacancies in the DOEPA, and we are working to fill them.
- We must increase college ministries, prison ministries and other evangelical efforts.
- Congratulations to Bp. +MARK on his nomination for diocesan hierarch.

Message from Bp. +MARK, Diocesan Administrator

- So far, Bp. +MARK has made more than 80 visits to 31 parishes.
- More visits are needed to fill vacancies.
- Please see administrator's report.
- Many thanks to Mat. Sandy Kopestonsky for her remarkable work compiling important documentation.

Diocesan Chancellor's report – see report published online

OCA Chancellor's report was given by Fr. John Jillions.

- Fr. John has been meeting with Diocesan Chancellors and Treasurers to build and strengthen relationships.
- Greetings from Met. +TIKHON, who also called Bp. +MARK to congratulate him on his nomination for diocesan hierarch.
- Central Administration is exploring new ideas with Diocesan Treasurers and Chancellors.
 - Biggest challenge: who are we, apart from ethnic jurisdictions?
 - Need to heal from many years of fiscal chaos and build relationships on new, positive experiences. Cooperation between the Holy Synod and the Metropolitan Council is improving, but still delicate.
 - Need forgiveness for past betrayals
 - Focus on evangelism
 - Increase relationships between monasteries and parishes
 - Work to heal seminary fragmentation
 - Must move on from this period as a vacant diocese
 - Must focus on parish health and revitalization
 - All of this will ONLY HAPPEN if Christ is the center of everything we do

Diocesan Deans' Reports – see reports published online.

Treasurer's report was given by Fr. Martin Browne.

- See report published online.
- Question: where is the "Blue House" (Diocesan Center) located?
 - Next to the red brick building (orphanage).
- Fr. Nicholas Solak asked, "What percentage of the DOEPA budget goes to the national church?"
 - Currently 61%. We are moving towards an arrangement where all dioceses will pay roughly 35%.
- A comment from the floor expressed concern about minimization of the national church.

- It's dangerous to want to keep money "for my own parish" or "for my own diocese." This way of thinking is detrimental to the national church. When the national church grows, we all grow and benefit.
- We need a commitment to authenticity, to communicate to the coming generations who have legitimate questions about the content of our faith and how we manifest that in our lives. How are we spending our time? What are our priorities?
- Some may feel that they cannot effect positive change because they tell themselves, "I'm just one person; how much of a difference can I make?" Imagine if Rosa Parks had thought that way.

Auditors' report

- See attached. No problems were uncovered in the audit.

The Metropolitan Council report was given by Fr. James Weremedic

- See attached
- Mark Linnehan asked if the **OCA** has a strategy to rebuild the trust that was shattered by various recent events.
 - Fr. John Jillions commented that the only way to rebuild that trust is to create new, positive experiences. For example, Met. +TIKHON is the OCA endorser for military chaplains. His Beatitude is essentially an ambassador to other faiths and to other military endorsers.
 - Please forward information regarding vacant chaplaincy positions to the DOEPA email address.
- We have an urgent need to move our archives to a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment.

The motion to accept the administrative reports was made and seconded. The motion passed.

Departmental reports

- See reports posted online

The proposed budget was presented by Fr. Martin Browne.

- See attached.
- Lowered census numbers mean reduced income.
- The proposed budget includes a significant increase in the salary of the diocesan hierarch. This is to bring it in line with the OCA episcopal remuneration policy, according to which the hierarch should be paid 51% of the average income in his diocese.
- The motion to accept the **budget** was made by Fr. Nicholas Solak and seconded by Fr. John Onofrey. **The motion passed unanimously.**

2015 Assembly

- The date and location of the 2015 assembly were not selected due to changing conditions at the Mechanicsburg mission. The Diocesan Council will select the date in the near future.
- A request was made from the floor that the Diocesan Council consider moving the Diocesan Assembly to sometime outside of winter.

The motion to adjourn was made by Jim O'Brien and seconded from the floor. The motion passed. The assembly was closed with the singing of "It is truly meet."

Respectfully submitted,

Daria Cortese, lay secretary

Fr. Jason Franchak, clergy secretary