

52nd Annual Diocesan Assembly Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania

St. Michael the Archangel Orthodox Church, Jermyn PA

January 28-29, 2016

Thursday, January 28 3-4pm

Check-in Best Western Hotel, 25 S. Main Street, Carbondale, PA

Registration, St. Michael's Church 4pm Vespers

St. Michael's Church, 305 Walnut Street, Jermyn, PA

Session I

The Assembly was formally opened at 5:11 PM with the singing of "O Heavenly King."

Presentation of the Agenda

- Fr. John Onofrey presented the credentials:
 - 1 hierarch
 - 22 clergy delegates
 - 20 lay delegates
 - 1 Diocesan Council representative
 - 13 alternate delegates
 - 2 guests
 - **43 total votes**
- By unanimous general acclamation the Assembly approved the nomination of Fr. Martin Browne as clergy chairman and Mr. Larry Skvir as lay chairman.
- By unanimous general acclamation the Assembly approved the nomination of Fr. Stephen Vernak as clergy secretary and Mrs. Daria Cortese as lay secretary.
- By unanimous general acclamation the Assembly approved Fr. James Weremedic, Fr. Michael Demko and Mr. George Shackleton as tellers and nominating committee members.

Message of the Diocesan Hierarchy (see attachment)

Highlights:

- The Archbishop thanked all Diocesan Council members for their support and diligent service.
- Many thanks to Mat. Sandra Kopestansky for her tireless work.
- Thanks to Fr. Martin Browne, recently appointed Diocesan Chancellor and former Diocesan Treasurer.
- Thanks to Fr. Ignatius Gauvain, recently appointed Diocesan Treasurer.
- Thanks to Fr. John Kowalczyk and Saint Michael's Church for hosting the Assembly. Thanks also to Fr. John for his many years of service as Diocesan Chancellor and Treasurer.
- Thanks to Fr. John Perich for curating the museum at St. Tikhon's.

- Thanks to Fr. Stephen Vernak for compiling the Vespers book used at the 4:00 PM service.
- Thanks to Fr. Nicholas Solak for spearheading the formation the Clergy Peer Support Group program.
- Thanks to the Diocesan Finance Committee.
- Thanks to Dr. Doug Yates for creating a database to simplify and streamline PSP compliance, background checks and other relevant information.
- Thanks to all clergy, matushki and families.
- Thanks to all youth volunteers.
- Thanks to Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk and the Liturgical Life Committee.
- Thanks to Fr. Tim Hojnicky for taking control of the diocesan Facebook page.
- Equitable clergy compensation, restoring trust in our diocese and social media use continue to be important issues. Fighting the scandal of biblical illiteracy is also crucial.
- For a complete list of the Archbishop's activities over the past year, please see his calendar on the diocesan website.

Minutes of the 51st Assembly

The minutes from the previous Assembly were posted online prior to the meeting. A motion to approve them was made by Fr. Timothy Hojnicky and seconded by Fr. Timothy Cremeens. The motion passed unanimously.

Session II

Guest Address followed by Q & A

Fr. Tryphon from the All-Merciful Saviour Monastery, Vashon Island

- To reach our faithful, especially our youth, we must be joyful.
- In order to love to God we need to own our heart. If we are playing a part, we do not own our heart; and we cannot love God.
- It is good to celebrate the diversity of humanity, like a variety of flower called a dahlia (different sizes, colors, and shapes).
- We are to live our lives authentically – it attracts people to Christ.
- It is difficult to send a young covert to a parish, only to have them disillusioned by what they see in the parish
- We must foster a culture of love and joy in our parishes, that is Orthodox AND American .
- Every person we encounter is either an Orthodox Christian or a potential Orthodox Christian.
- Every person we meet is an icon of either Christ glorified or Christ crucified.
- We must struggle against the danger of clericalism.

Due to time constraints the scheduled Small Compline service was cancelled.

Fr. Martin Browne called for nominations from the floor.

- Clergy Metropolitan Council Representative
 - Fr. James Weremedic, *accepted* (nominated by Michael Dorosh)
 - Fr. Timothy Hojnicky, *accepted* (nominated by Mark Linnehan)

- Lay Metropolitan Council Representative
 - M. Sandy Kopostonsky, *declinde* (nominated by Fr. Timothy Cremeens)
 - Susan Schlasta, *accepted* (nominated by Fr. John Kowalczyk)

- Clergy “at-large” Diocesan Council Representative
 - Fr. George Volkovinsky, *accepted* (nominated by Fr. Dn. Sergei Kapral)
 - Fr. Michael Demko, *declined* (nominated by Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk)
 - Fr. Stephen Vernak, *accepted* (nominated by Fr. Ignatius Gauvain)

- Lay “at-large” Diocesan Council Representative
 - Sandra Tosca, *accepted* (nominated by Archbishop +MARK)
 - Pdn. Peter Skoog, *accepted* (nominated by Fr. Timothy Hojnicki)

- Diocesan Auditors
 - Gregory Polk, *accepted* (nominated by Archbishop +MARK)
 - Pdn. Sergei Kapral, *declined* (nominated by Mark Linnehan)
 - Joseph Tosca, *accepted* (nominated by Archbishop +MARK)

- Deanery Clergy Representatives and Deanery Lay Representatives will be elected during tomorrow’s Deanery Caucuses.

A motion to close the nominations was made by John Parker and seconded by Fr. George Volkovinsky. The motion carried unanimously.

The session was closed with the singing of “It is truly meet” at 9:53 PM.

St. Michael’s Center

Friday, January 29th

8am Reading of the Hours

8:30am Divine Liturgy

Celebrants: Archbishop Mark (Diocesan Hierarch); Priest Martin Browne (chancellor); Archpriest John Kowalczyk (rector); Archpriest Nicholas Solak (Wilkes Barre Dean); Archpriest Victor Gorodenchuk (Philadelphia Dean); Protodeacon Sergei Kapral; Protodeacon Gabriel Petorak; Protodeacon Peter Skoog

10:30am Brunch

Session III

The chairman called for an additional nominee for Diocesan Auditor, as Pdn. Sergei Kapral, who was nominated the previous evening, declined the nomination.

- Fr. James Carpenter was nominated by Fr. Barnabas Fravel.
- Fr. John Nightengale was nominated by Fr. Timothy Hojnicky.
- At this time David Yeosock also nominated Pdn. Sergei Kapral for Lay Metropolitan Council Representative.

Highlights from the Address of Melanie Ringa, OCA Treasurer

- Oct 2011 All American Council – the discussion regarding assessments and funding the church were uncomfortable and contentious.
- Jan 2012 first annual chancellor and treasurers meeting in Syosset
- Prep work for the July 2015 All-American Council was done through personal visitations to the various dioceses.
- The 5th Chancellors and Treasurers Meeting (in 2016) represented a “miraculous” transformation from the first meeting. Ideas were shared respectfully and constructively.
- Ms. Ringa complimented our Diocesan Financial Committee, its work and production of uniform financial statements.
- The 2016 National Church budget is \$1.8 million.
- Financial Reports should be shared and explained to our parishioners, to help them understand the real needs of the parish and the concrete consequences of fiscal deficits.
- “What do I get for my assessment?”
 - Approximately 75% of assessment monies go towards administration at the national level. The remainder fund programs such as mission planting grants.
- Ms. Ringa spoke about Met. +TIKHON’s “four pillars” vision and how we can realize our vocation as the Church.
- Interest from a large bequest was used to run a mission school in May 2015, which was attended by representatives from every diocese. We hope to run another mission school soon.
- After the decline of the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards, the Metropolitan Council instituted the Stewards of the OCA. The OCA Met Council hired a part time assistant/consultant. This allows the faithful another opportunity to support particular programs that offered by the OCA.
- Complimented His Eminence Archbishop +MARK on the articles that were shared via OCA.org
- Vignette of Life in the chancellery: Pre-sanctified Liturgy and the fact that Met. Tikhon directed the choir in the absence of the regular director. She expressed that His Beatitude shares a message of joy and authenticity in his ministry, which sets an example for the rest of the staff, and the whole church.

The Credential Report for the morning session was presented by Fr. John Onofrey:

- 1 Hierarchy
- 23 clergy delegates
- 24 lay delegates
- 1 Diocesan Council member (48 votes total)
- 19 alternates/observers
- 1 guest

Treasurers Report by Fr. Ignatius Gauvain

- Our budget is based on the “worst possible scenario,” hence the -\$20,000 deficit.
- If each parish offered 10% , we would have a \$30,000 surplus.
- Fr. Ignatius encouraged the Assembly to embrace generous giving with gratitude to God and confidence in His providence.

- A motion to accept the report was made by Pdn. Sergei Kapral and seconded by Fr. John Onofrey. The motion passed unanimously.

Diocesan Auditors Report by Fr. Dn. Sergei Kapral

- See the full report posted online.
- The auditors met quarterly to review reports.
- Reports are fairly and accurately stated.
- A motion to accept the report was made by Mark Linnehan and seconded by John Malinchock. The motion passed unanimously.

Budget Proposal by Fr. Ignatius Gauvain

- The greatest increase is in personnel salaries. The greatest decrease is in remittance to the National Church.
- Several line items were discussed
 - Mark Linnehan asked if we will be able to cover our budgeted loss with savings.
 - Answer: Yes.
 - Fr. Daniel Kovalak asked, “How do we support the \$8,000 funding for Lilly Grant? Who approved the expense?”
 - Answer: It was approved by Archbishop Mark and the Diocesan Council at the November 2015 meeting
 - Larry Skvir asked, “How will parishes be invoiced? Will there be a change in procedure?”
 - Answer: Same invoice, not based upon a “head tax” but by income as reported via each parishes’ submitted Financial Statements
- A motion to approve the budget proposal was made by Fr. John Onofrey and seconded by Fr. James Weremedic. The motion passed unanimously.

Diocesan Financial Resolution Presentation by Mark Linnehan

- Given the choice of how to view our parishes (business, club, or family) – **family** is the best paradigm.
 - Although we are required by IRS tax code to use some business tools, but that doesn’t make us a business. Often the need for these tools leads us to forget who we are.
- This proposal was intentionally presented at this point due to our waiting to see the results of the 2015 AAC in Atlanta
- The proposal allows our entire Diocese to move to tithing (10%) within five years.

- The Giving Levels are as follows:
 - Level 1 \$160/ member 0% of operational budget
 - Level 2 \$120/ member 2.5% of operational budget
 - Level 3 \$80/ member 5% of operational budget
 - Level 4 \$40/ member 7.5 % of operational budget
 - Level 5 \$0/ member 10% of operational budget
- Parishes should contact the Treasurer to declare their chosen giving level (NOTE: parishes may use the Giving Level Calculator on the Diocesan website).
- All parishes must complete the Standardized Financial Report.
 - NEW RECOMMENDATION: What if a parish doesn't submit the information above? Parish will be assessed at \$170/person based upon the most recent census.
- What should be included in the operating budget calculation?
 - Pass-throughs such as charitable collections should NOT be included.
 - Savings should NOT be included.
 - Interest and investments SHOULD be included.
- A resolution motion to accept and implement the Giving Levels Model was made by Mark Linnehan and seconded by Fr. Timothy Cremeens. The motion passed unanimously.
 - Mark Linnehan made an amendment to the motion and it was accepted by the seconder, Fr. Timothy Cremeens: "That the Diocesan Council is authorized to establish a (dis)incentive in order to receive information in a timely manner."
 - A motion to accept the amendment was made by Fr. John Onofrey and seconded by Fr. James Weremedic. The motion passed unanimously.
 - Fr. Ignatius Gauvain made a resolution motion that the Diocese acknowledge the parishes of Holy Cross (Williamsport); Holy Apostles (Mechanicsburg); Christ the Saviour (Harrisburg) for leading the way by tithing. The motion was seconded by John Evanstock, and discussion followed. **NOTE:** After discussion the motion was **withdrawn** by Fr. Ignatius and John Evanstock.

Report on Clergy Peer Groups and the Lilly Grant by Fr. Nicholas Solak

- An attempt to actively address the issues of clergy health and compensation; as well as the complexity of parish ministry
- Peer groups are a common mechanism to help learn in many disciplines.
 - 2 Dioceses in the OCA have received grants from the Lilly Foundation (Romanian Episcopate; Diocese of Eastern PA)
 - Self-directed learning, as well as support between clergy. It is collaborative.
- Our \$25,000 grant is Pan-Orthodox (24 total participants across jurisdictions).
- Acronym: **Honoring Orthodox Pastoral Excellence (HOPE)**
- Discussion:
 - **Dave Clark** from Holy Trinity, Wilkes Barre asked if the funding was immediately available. The answer is yes.
 - **Fr. George Volkovinsky** asked if participation is mandatory. The answer is no.
 - **Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk** asked if the money needed to be used in the 3 years. There was no definitive answer, but it is assumed that the all the money should be used for the intended purpose of the 3 years, and our plan supports this. If we unexpectedly have funds left over, we will consult the Lilly Foundation.
 - **Fr. Ignatius Gauvain asked how to enter a group.** You can either form your own group, or ask to join an existing group. In either case, contact Fr. Nicholas Solak.

- A motion to accept the report was made by Pdn. Sergei Kapral and seconded by Fr. John Kowalczyk. The motion passed unanimously.

Diocesan By-laws Presentation

- **John Zimich** from Holy Resurrection read a prepared letter from members at the Cathedral expressing concerns, particularly with regard to the authority of the diocesan bishop to “suppress” parishes.
 - Article 12, Section 2: this article is taken verbatim from the OCA Statute, and consequently cannot be changed or amended by the Diocese.
 - Section 3, Article 4 & 5:
 - These items will be discussed by Mark Linnehan and John Zimich over lunch to understand these items more clearly.

The Assembly broke for lunch at 2:06 PM.

The Assembly reconvened at 2:41 PM.

The Credential Report for the afternoon session was presented by Fr. John Onofrey:

- 1 Hierarch
- 23 clergy delegates
- 24 lay delegates
- 1 Diocesan Council member (48 votes total)
- 19 alternates/observers
- 1 guest

Diocesan By-laws Presentation, *cont.*

- Most of the items from the previous session were satisfied as being resolved through discussion.
 - **Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk** proposed a motion and amended (*The Diocesan hierarch has the authority to [close – removed] dissolve a parish after sufficient discussion between the Diocesan authorities and the Parish Assembly [Council – removed] has determined that the parish is no longer viable*). The motion was seconded by John Zimich. The motion was defeated.
 - Discussion followed:
 - His Eminence Archbishop +MARK mentioned that the motion may not be acceptable according to the OCA Statute or the Canons of the Church.
 - Fr. Victor and the seconder John Zimich amended the resolution a second time.
 - David Yeosock spoke against the amendment as the OCA has put some of the best minds to this process, and that making a change “on the fly” is imprudent.
 - Fr. James Weremedic and Fr. Ignatius Gauvain also spoke against the amendment saying that it is not within the competence of the Assembly.
 - John Linnehan, John Shingara and Fr. John Nightingale also spoke against the amendment.

- Mark Linnehan clarified the definition of parish ownership/title, *in trust* for the Diocese.
- Is the Diocese trying to take your money, property, etc?
 - The Diocese is under your *stewardship*.
 - Your parish bylaws determine how to deal with assets.
 - The Diocese only gets involved if your parish is closing.
 - The Diocese needs to know if a closing parish has liabilities such as a cemetery, collapsing structure or debt.
- A question was raised regarding how a parish determines compensation. Archbishop +MARK said that there are OCA guidelines to determine compensation.
- What would the Diocese do if a parish decided to refuse to comply with the OCA & Diocesan Guidelines by 2017?
- A motion to accept the revised Diocesan Bylaws was made by Fr. Stephen Vernak and seconded by Fr. John Onofrey. The motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Reports Discussion and Acceptance led by Fr. Martin Browne

- A motion to accept the Chancellor's Report was made by Fr. Timothy Cremeens and seconded by Fr. George Volkovinsky. The motion passed unanimously.
- Deanery Reports:
 - There was no report from the Wilkes-Barre Deanery.
 - A motion to accept the reports from the Philadelphia and Frackville Deaneries was made by John Malinchok and seconded by Fr. James Weremedic. The motion passed unanimously.
- A motion to accept the Metropolitan Council Report was made by Pdn. Sergei Kapral and seconded by Larry Skvir. The motion passed unanimously.
- A motion to accept the Diocesan Council Secretary's Report was made by Fr. Timothy Hojnicky and seconded by Joe Prapura. The motion passed unanimously.
- Discussion:
 - **Fr. Daniel Kovalak** raised a question regarding the Diocese helping the parish understand sexual misconduct policy. Would someone be available?
 - *Archbishop +MARK encouraged parishes to invite Cindy Heise from the OCA.*
 - **Fr. Daniel Kovalak** asked a question regarding the diocesan videos at the AAC? Why did we not have one?
 - *Archbishop +MARK said that he did not know about this.*
 - **Fr. Daniel Kovalak** asked regarding a supposed Bishop/Priest/Deacon of ROCOR.
 - *Archbishop +MARK said that this is something that the OCA is involved, as this goes beyond our Diocesan borders*
 - **Fr. George Volkovinsky** asked regarding the background checks and PA law.
 - *Fr. Martin Browne responded that our lawyer is of the opinion that Parish Council members are not required to have background checks if they do not have "more than an incidental contact with children."*
- A motion to accept the Communications Report was made by Fr. David Szewczyk and seconded by Fr. Daniel Kovalak. The motion passed unanimously.

- A motion to accept the Church School/ Education Report was made by Larry Skvir and seconded by Fr. Daniel Kovalak. The motion passed unanimously.
- A motion to accept the Health Insurance Report was made by Pdn. Sergei Kapral and seconded by Fr. Daniel Kovalak. The motion passed unanimously.
- A motion to accept the Office of Young Adults Report was made by Fr. Timothy Hojnicky and seconded by Mark Linnehan. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

- Diocesan property update:
 - Archbishop +MARK stated that we are still working towards this and are waiting on the Monastery to complete its work.

New Business

ELECTIONS

Tellers: Fr. Michael Demko, Fr. John Onofrey, John Shingara, & John Malinchok

Candidate biographies were presented by Fr. Martin Browne.

Delegates elected the following individuals via secret ballot:

- Fr. Stephen Vernak, Clergy "at-large" Diocesan Council Representative
- Sandra Tosca, Lay "at-large" Diocesan Council Representative
- Fr. Timothy Hojnicky, Clergy Metropolitan Council Representative
- Susan Schlasta, Lay Metropolitan Council Representative
- Gregory Polk, Joseph Tosca, Dn. James Carpenter, Diocesan Auditors

The following Deanery Clergy Representatives and Deanery Lay Representatives were elected by Deanery Caucus :

- Philadelphia**
 - o Clergy: Fr. Barnabas Fravel
 - o Lay: Protodeacon Peter Skoog
- Wilkes Barre**
 - o Clergy: Fr. Michael Demko
 - o Lay: Protodeacon Sergei Kapral
- Frackville**
 - o Clergy: Fr. John Onofrey
 - o Lay: John Shingara

Date and location of 2017 Assembly:

January 26th – January 27th at Christ the Saviour (Harrisburg, PA). Approved by acclamation.

A motion to close the Assembly was made by Fr. Timothy Hojnicky and seconded by Fr. Daniel Kovalak. The motion passed unanimously.

The Assembly was adjourned at 4:26 PM with the singing of “It is truly meet.”

Respectfully submitted,

Daria Cortese, lay secretary

Fr. Stephen Vernak, clergy secretary

DRAFT