

Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania (OCA)

Meeting of the Diocesan Council - 10/13/09

The meeting opened with the singing of "O Heavenly King..." at 10:40 am

Present: *His Grace, Bishop Tikhon, Fr. John Kowalczyk, Fr. Martin Browne, Fr. Michael Hatrak, Fr. Daniel Kovalak, Fr. Nicholas Solak, Fr. Timothy Hojnicky, Fr. Mahaffey (came at the very end) Elsie Herman, Mary Sernak, Rdr. Peter Bolhender, Doug Yates, Marie Proch.*

Absent: *Fr. John Onofrey*

Note: no Philadelphia clergy representative present.

A motion was made to accept the minutes of the previous Diocesan Council meeting made by Elsie Herman, seconded by Rdr. Peter Bolhender. Motion passed unanimously.

BISHOP'S REPORT:

His Grace expressed his positive feel about the life of our Diocese. The census is down by 38, however it is better than last year where the census was down by 90, and the year before by 150. His Grace prays that this is a sign of a turn around in our diocese. His Grace is pleased at how more laity are getting involved and the clergy are being more proactive in leading them.

In terms of the Assembly: Reports will be sent out electronically to save on money. It is recommended that observers are encouraged to attend if they would like. Observers are eligible to be in position of election.

In terms of the Diocesan Council: It was reported that Fr. Daniel Kovalak is now serving on the Council as Dean of the Wilkes-Barre Deanery. There is no clergy representative from the Philadelphia deanery, nor is there a clergy representative at large. There is a vacancy open on the audit committee. Fr. John Soucek has agreed to temporarily help.

Diocesan By-laws: These are in process and will be compliant to the statute and will help in running things like the Diocesan Assembly.

Deaneries: There was a clergy retreat in August with an excellent attendance. It was proposed to restructure the deaneries to strengthen the deaneries in a pastoral way. His Grace reported that Fr. Michael Hatrak was re-elected Dean of the Frackville Deanery. Fr. Daniel Kovalak was elected Dean of the Wilkes-Barre Deanery, and Fr. David Mahaffey was elected Dean of the Philadelphia Deanery. His Grace attended all three meetings for each deanery. His Grace stressed the need and encouraged the clergy to follow the statutes in each deanery.

Developing Departments: The Education department would be expanded to be the "Church School & Curriculum Department" chaired by Maria Proch. It is hoped that eventually each deanery would hold its own Church School conference.

The Department of Adult Education & OCF would work to coordinate OCF chapters in the Diocese. There are presently 6 OCF Chapters in this diocese.

The Department of Teens would serve to meet the needs of the teens of the diocese through various retreat, camps and programs. Fr. Timothy Hojnicky was asked to serve as director.

The Department of Communications, headed by Cindy David, would work on the newsletter, website, and all other communication issues.

The Department of Liturgical life would coordinate Altar boy retreats, deacon programs, etc.

The Department of Spiritual Development & Vocations would work to encourage vocations on all levels within the Church.

The Diocesan Center: A resolution was presented to the Holy Synod at the last meeting concerning the land that the Diocesan center rests. The Holy Synod responded that the land is under the authority of Metropolitan Jonah as the land is stavropegial land, and the Metropolitan is responsible for this. His Grace spoke to Krissa & Krissa about the legal matters. The Monastery will be meeting to establish by-laws and a Typikon. From then we can adjust titles and deeds accordingly.

Fr. Daniel Kovalak made a resolution:

In conformity with our prior resolution to pursue the procurement of the property upon which our diocesan center rests, and

WHEREAS, through ongoing communications among all interested parties to said property, it has been determined, as reported by Bishop Tikhon, that (1) the property is currently owned by St. Tikhon's Monastery, a stavropegial institution of the Orthodox Church in America under the authority of Metropolitan Jonah, and (2) the parcel under consideration sought by the diocese may be legally isolated from the monastery parcels and thus not subject to an encumbrances,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania pursue the procurement of said property under a purchase agreement to be prepared prior to the convening of the next Diocesan Assembly scheduled for December 4, 2009, with the stipulation that should the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania relocate its diocesan center or be dissolved, that St. Tikhon's Monastery will be offered first-option on said property.

Seconded by Fr. Michael Hatrak. Resolution passed unanimously.

In terms of OCA news: The Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council recently met in joint session. The Strategic Plan for the OCA along with the ongoing legal issues were discussed. Positive movement in the process has been slowed by the legal issues. The

Holy Synod is trying to balance pastoral discretion and legal advice. Fr. Nicholas Solak made the point that as a diocese we need to be prepared and accept the decision and be ready to move on. Pension plan changes were discussed. Because of the changing demographics and older clergy coming later into the plan, the plan was losing money. The plan was changed to deal with this. The All American Council is set for 2011. The two proposed sites are Seattle and Denver.

His Grace reported that Mat. Shuga recently had a stroke, and is now in a rehabilitation center in Wilkes-Barre. Mat. Yuschak is in a nursing home in the West Chester area.

His Grace expressed his thanks to his staff for the activity and help in the diocesan center.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

There is no auditors' report due to scheduling issues. Fr. John Soucek was asked to help in place of Fr. David Mahaffey. It was recommended by Mat. Cantrell that the process of receivables needs to be changed. Fr. Martin Browne presented his report. Elsie Herman moved to accept the report seconded by Reader Peter Bohlender. The report was approved subject to audit.

Fr. Daniel Kovalak suggested to present the aging summary at the Assembly in December and stressed that the books should have been audited regardless of the circumstance.

Fr. Daniel Kovalak moved that as a Diocesan Council we insist that audits be done every 3 months, apologizing for not having them done, and asking that the bishop or chancellor charge the new auditors with specific tasks and appointing a chief auditor to coordinate these audits. Fr. Nicholas Solak seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

The 2010 Budget was proposed with much discussion ensuing. The Assessment would be increased by \$10.

Fr. Daniel Kovalak made a motion to cap the increase at \$7 seconded by Marie Proch. The motion was defeated by the majority.

Reader Peter Bohlender moved to accept the budget in concept as it stands with the \$10 increase, seconded by Fr. Nicholas Solak. Motion was approved with one abstention by Marie Proch. Fr. Michael Hatrak stressed that this budget needs to be in the hands of the people as soon as possible.

CHANCELLOR'S REPORT:

Fr. John reported on the work and travels of the bishop for the last quarter. He spoke on the upcoming Diocesan Assembly and the technical items such as reservations, accommodations and meals to be had at the two day assembly.

OLD BUSINESS:

The issue of the Diocesan Center was discussed at length previously in the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Fr. Nicholas Solak mentioned that when the fallout comes from the legal matters that the bishop should communicate to the deans what is factual rather than hearing rumors through the internet, etc. If this is done in an organized and timely manner then the clergy can then accurately communicate this information with their people.

There was a long discussion on the diocese presenting a bulletin template to keep things standardized.

Fr. Michael Hatrak made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Fr. David Mahaffey. The meeting adjourned at 3:35pm with the singing of "It is Truly Meet!"

Respectfully submitted,

Priest Timothy Hojnicky