

**Diocesan Council Meeting  
Meeting Minutes – August 18, 2015  
St. Mary’s Coaldale, PA**

**1. Opening Prayer**

- a. *“In giving birth...”*
- b. *Meeting began at 10am*

**ATTENDANCE**

**Administration:** *Archbishop Mark (Hierarch); Fr. John Kowalczyk (Chancellor); Fr. Ignatius Gauvin (Treasurer); Aric Gingo (Communications)*

**Clergy:** *Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk; Fr. Paul Schellbach; Fr. Nicholas Solak; Fr. Stephen Vernak; Fr. James Weremedic; Pdn. Gabriel Kapral, Fr. Timothy Hojnicky*

**Laity:** *Elsie Herman; Mark Linnehan; David Yeosock;*

**2. Minutes of June 16, 2015**

**MOTION:** *Approve the minutes of the June 16<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Council Meeting*  
**Fr. James Weremedic; Second: David Yeosock. Approved.**

**3. Message of the Diocesan Archbishop**

- a. Attorneys John Krisa & John Petorak
  - *ABM (Archbishop Mark) gave an update on the legalities surrounding the property.*
  - *Paperwork is complete, Fr. Sergius (STM) returned it to him, and we are waiting on the Attorney General to approve.*
- b. AAC and Revised Statutes
  - *ABM state the council went well, and that it was “peaceful”*
  - *The Statutes passed overwhelmingly*
  - *Financial Resolution passed overwhelmingly as well; although ABM had some concerns on its impact on our Diocese, we will work hard within the new system*
- c. Supporting the Work of the Church
  - *Will be addressed later in the agenda during the presentation of the Finance Committee*
- d. Fr. Jon Bohush, St. Nicholas, Bp. Sava

- *At the AAC we had a meeting with DOEPA clergy, Met. Tikhon, Archbishop Benjamin, Fr. Jillions, and a professional investigator.*
  - *Archbishop Mark, Fr. John Kowalczyk, and Fr. Nicholas Solak met with Bp. Sava (Georgian Orthodox Church - GOC) this past week.*
  - *The parish has appealed to the GOC. Bp. Sava has met with the parish twice, which was inappropriate.*
  - *Fr. Timothy asked if the Diocese has been in contact with the leadership of the parish. ABM stated that they have not been receptive to any overtures*
  - *The parish is still under “interdict” and they are not having any services*
  - *There was discussion about the possible ramifications of His Eminence releasing the parish to the GOC*
  - *ABM will be meeting with Metropolitan TIKHON next week to discuss St. Nicholas*
  - *ABM has indicated that Fr. John Bohush will remain under suspension for the time being. There will not be a spiritual court in the foreseeable future*
  - *Several clergy stated that we should probably not be in a rush to release them, but should rather wait and see if their leadership will repent; could be years, even decades before all the wounds are healed, but that still may be worth it.*
- e. ROCOR has established a mission in Lewisburg (close to Holy Cross in Williamsport)
- *ABM has been discussing the Diocesan boundaries with regard to the establishment of the mission*
  - *There was not any discussion ahead of time with our Diocese or Parishes.*
  - *An organizer of the ROCOR Mission has been contacting members of Holy Cross to ask them to join the mission*
  - *It was recommended that ABM arrange a meeting with Metropolitan HILARION*
  - *There was discussion about the relation of this ROCOR Mission to Diocesan Boundaries, Canonical Inter-Orthodox order, Holy Trinity (State College), Bucknell College, Beavertown Mission, and Holy Cross (Williamsport, PA)*

f. Matushka Sandra Kopestonsky

- *ABM recommends that she be given vacation-pay, in recognition of her service. This will be retro-active to her recent vacation.*

**MOTION:** *Provide retro-active pay for M. Sandy's recent vacation; as well as going forward. Fr. Nicholas Solak; Second: Fr. Timothy Hojnicky. Approved.*

- **NOTE:** *Fr. Nicholas Solak recommends that we begin to look at possible replacements when Matushka retires. This could be a possibility of creating a position that consolidates Subdeacon, driver, and secretary.*

g. Additional Item: Driver for Archbishop Mark

- *ABM indicated that he is not as confident driving long distances. He needs to make other arrangements/and find drivers.*
- *We may need to anticipate more expenses to cover a driver, including housing, stipend/hourly, etc.*

h. Diocesan Car

- *ABM expressed his thanks to the Diocesan Council for their consideration.*
- *Fr. Ignatius read a thank you letter from the Vernak family*

**4. Chancellors Report**

- Fr. John Kowalczyk read a letter (attached) offering his resignation as Chancellor*
- ABM thanked Fr. John for his long and faithful service*
- ABM will present Fr. John with a pectoral Cross at the Diocesan Assembly*
- ABM will present Fr. Martin Browne with a pectoral Cross at the Diocesan Assembly*
- Fr. John also shared an update on St. Basil in Simpson. Fr. John Nightingale and Fr. Nicholas Solak have been trying to help the parish in their transition in leadership, as well as particular issues in the parish. Fr. Benjamin Johnson has been blessed to leave the parish*

- f. Fr. Nicholas Solak asked about ABM intentions with regard to Chancellor. ABM indicated that he has asked Fr. Martin Browne to accept the position. He is awaiting his firm response.

**MOTION:** Accept the Diocesan Chancellors report. **Elsie Herman; Second: Fr. James Weremedic. Approved.**

## 5. Treasurers Report

- a. Fr Ignatius distributed his report
- b. He would like to “clean-up” aged invoices, that have very little likelihood of being paid.
- Mark Linnehan asked for a summary to be reviewed at our next meeting. Fr. Ignatius will provide.
- c. There was discussion regarding the depreciation of the Subaru, and adding the Honda. There are some issues with how it was entered, and should be cleared up in the next report.
- d. Aging Summary - \$65,848.94
- Pottstown is over \$20,000 in arrears. They are to be contacted by their Dean.
- e. Profit/Loss Statement
- Income: \$306,255.21
  - Expenses: \$286,609.57
  - NET Income: **\$19,645.64**
- f. There was a discussion regarding our statement of assets. Fr. Ignatius will review with Fr. Martin Browne (past treasurer), Paul Berdy (accountant), and others to make sure that our assets are stated properly for next meeting.
- g. Mark Linnehan asked about the purchase of car, and where is it reflected in the report.
- \$25,744.00 was the purchase price
    1. \$17,900 Car Account
    2. \$3,500 Donation
    3. \$4,000 2010 Subaru Purchase Price
    4. There is a slight deficit, will be articulated more clearly at the next meeting.
- h. Fr. Ignatius noted that he has begun to scan documents, and is creating a “handbook” for future reference

**MOTION:** Accept the Treasurers Report with notes (below).  
**Mark Linnehan; Second: Fr. Paul Schellbach. Approved.**

**NOTE:** there are several questions regarding line items 25610, 9 “Health Insurance Account”, 16400, 60901

**Break for Lunch – 12:30pm**

**Return from Lunch – 1:10pm**

**6. Finance Committee Report – Mark Linnehan**

- a. A report was presented (attached)
- b. Task 1: Recommending a method to the Diocese for meeting financial obligations to the OCA
  - Complete
- c. Task 2: Evaluating readiness and recommending methods for the shift to proportional giving within the Diocese
  - Levels 1 -5
  - Committee feels this should support the Diocese
  - There was discussion regarding “Pros and Cons” of the suggested method, as well as the further issues related. Sections 1-4.
- d. Fr. Solak mentioned that sections 3-4 is a little far from the committees task. Mark acknowledged that especially section 4 was outside of their scope, however they thought it was important to at least bring it up.
- e. It was discussed that the Diocese should have another source of income – i.e. United Appeal
- f. There was a lot of discussion as to whether or not we are ready to change to a “level system”

**MOTION:** Accept Recommendation 1 of Task 2 of the Committee – “Transition to Proportional Giving Levels” to be presented at the Diocesan Assembly. **Fr. James Weremedic; Second: Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk. Approved.**

**NOTE:** Recommended - There needs to be a parish council workshop by deanery for rectors, parish council presidents, and treasurers.

**MOTION:** Accept Recommendation 2 of Task 2 of the Committee – Accumulate a (minimum 6 month) Diocesan Reserve. **Mark Linnehan; Second: Fr. James Weremedic. Approved, with one against.**

*Fr. Nicholas Solak spoke against the motion. He feels there is merit to the recommendation; however it is outside of the task of the committee.*

*ABM stated that there needs to be a standing committee, and Fr. Nicholas Solak said that there should be more input from the Diocesan Administration and Deans*

***MOTION: Accept Recommendation 3 of Task 2 of the Committee – Establish a Revitalization Budget Mark Linnehan; Second: Fr. Timothy Hojnicky. Defeated, with one in favor.***

*Fr. Ignatius is opposed to setting percentages before we have a budget.*

*Fr. Nicholas Solak is opposed due to our “track record” of Revitalization. He also believes that clergy health is a more critical issue.*

***MOTION: Recommendation 4 of Task 2 of the Committee – Establish a method for closing parishes. Mark Linnehan; Second: David Yeosock. ABM removed the motion, and stated that it will be taken up by the Administrative Committee.***

*During the discussion it was emphasized that this recommendation/motion is not a method, but rather an acknowledgment that the Diocese needs to be prepared for the eventual closure of some parishes*

*Fr. Nicholas spoke against the motion, until the time when there was a greater inclusion from the rest of the Council and administration.*

*ABM removed the motion, and stated that it will be taken up by the Administrative Committee.*

*ABM, and the Diocesan Council commends the Finance Committee, and thanks them for their great work!*

## 7. Deans' Reports

### a. Wilkes Barre Deanery

- *The deanery has not met this summer*
- *New priest in Nanticoke: Fr. Traian Stafiuc*
- *Fr. Benjamin Johnson transferred to the Diocese of the Midwest*
- *Noted that there is high level of mistrust amongst many of the parishes and clergy. There is a high level of dysfunction.*

### b. Frackville Deanery

- *Fr. John Edward was assigned to St. Michael in Mt. Carmel*
- *Deanery picnic – Minersville (8/17/15)*
- *Building Project ongoing in Mechanicsburg*
- *Frackville 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – Sept 6<sup>th</sup>*
- *Lykens is looking to parcel off rectory, and have a deacon serve them.*

### c. Philadelphia Deanery

- *St. Nicholas, Philadelphia*
  1. *See above*
- *Assumption of the Virgin, Philadelphia*
  1. *Fr. Matthew Cantrell is asking to be removed from the parish and laicized*
  2. *The parish is small, and their location is not ideal; however the parish is still relatively "healthy"*
- *Fr. James Weremedic has transferred to St. Nicholas, Bethlehem, PA*
- *Fr. Barnabas Fravel will begin his pastorate at St. Michael in Wilmington, DE*
- *Deanery Picnic on August 30<sup>th</sup>*

## 8. Continuing Education

### a. Three Clergy Continuing Education Sessions

- *Sept 28th Pottstown - Clergy Related Issues*
- *Oct 26<sup>th</sup> (location TBD) - Evangelizing*
- *Nov 23<sup>rd</sup> (location TBD) -*

### b. Clergy Peer Learning Groups – Lily Foundation

- *\$25,000 matching grant*

1. *\$8,000 already budgeted*
2. *Parish “buy-in” \$250 p/year for clergy*

- *Make our Good Parish Priests, Better*
- *Small Groups – Quarterly with a trained facilitator and a \$1,000 stipend*
- *Completely Voluntary, and it is open to other clergy of other jurisdictions, and Diocese*
- *Assist clergy at the end of their ministry, how to transition into retirement, and leave their parishes healthy*
- *Looking at also creating a Peer Group for Clergy Wives*

*The Diocesan Council thanks Fr. Nicholas for his work in organizing, and writing the grant for these groups.*

#### 9. Liturgical Life

- a. *Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk mentioned that there are plans to prepare Festal booklets for publication on the website*
- b. *Aric Gingo will dedicate a page for Liturgical Life on the website*
- c. *Fr. Ignatius asked if we can compile a list and rubric for local customs associated with the feasts*

#### 10. Metropolitan Council Report

- a. *Fall Session will be in September*
- b. *We will need to elect a lay member at the upcoming Assembly.*
- c. *Fr. Timothy mentioned that it would be nice for us to have a video at the next AAC*

#### 11. Communications/Website

- a. *Aric Gingo gave an oral report*
- b. *Website Traffic is steady – 273 p/day*
- c. *Submissions have been steady – 5 p/day*
- d. *“Alive in Christ” is at the printer. Next issue should be ready for the Fall*
- e. *Re-design the website – could be about \$600/\$700*
  - *Logo – we need to be “branded”*
- f. *Vimeo account has expired*
- g. *ABM asked about the calendar hits. Aric said that he does not have the information on hand.*

12. Old Business – Diocesan By-Laws

- a. *Remove Job Descriptions in Diocesan Administration*
- b. *Remove Parishioner Financial Obligations*

13. New Business

- a. *ABM asked that we offer a \$100 raise p/mo to Father Ignatius to acknowledge his extra technical support*

**MOTION:** *Additional \$100 p/mo towards Fr. Ignatius' stipend. Fr. Nicholas Solak;*  
**Second:** *Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk. Approved*

- b. *ABM will have a meeting with Church Mutual Insurance to discuss a proposal to the Diocese for a better rate. Should have a proposal at the next meeting.*
- c. *ABM asked that the Finance Committee continue their work, and getting a greater "buy-in" from the Administration and Deans*
  - *Deanery Finance Meetings, may also include a presentation on the proposed Diocesan Bylaws*
- d. *Fr. Nicholas Solak recommended that we should have a Diocesan Council Retreat before Great Lent*
- e. *Fr. George Volkovinsky*
  - *Names of attorneys have been forwarded to him*
  - *Diocese approved \$2,500 for his legal fund*
  - *Donation of \$400 has been received by the Diocese*

14. Schedule Next Meeting and Closing Prayer

- a. **November 10<sup>th</sup> from 10am – 5pm**
- b. *Christ the Saviour, Harrisburg, PA*

**Good of the order** – *the Council sang "Many Years" to Fr. John Kowalczyk for his many years of faithful service to the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania.*

**MOTION:** *To adjourn at 4:45. Fr. John Kowalczyk; Second: Fr. Paul Schellbach. Approved.*

---

Submitted by Fr. Stephen Vernak

---

Date

---

Approved by Archbishop Mark for Distribution

---

Date