

## Diocesan Council Meeting of 13 August 2020

**31 August 2020**

### Attendees:

Archbishop Mark	Fr. Timothy Hojnicky	Mark Linnehan
Fr. Martin Brown	Fr. Seraphim Reynolds	Danalisa Radu
Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk	Deacon Peter Staller	Aric Gringo
Fr. Nicholas Solak	Deacon John Shingara	Sebastian Crews

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

Archbishop Mark opened the meeting greeting the attendees and proceeded with the following topics:

- Holy Ascension Church – Lykens, PA – The sale of this property has been finalized. Documentation is in the Diocesan files. Archbishop Mark will contact Church Mutual Insurance about getting a refund for any monies held by them for coverage of the Lykens property and buildings.
- Holy Trinity Church – McAdoo, PA – Archbishop Mark and Fr. Timothy have met with various members of Holy Trinity. There is a need to verify who is a member of the church and who is not. There is a distinct possibility that non-members are using the church for various secular (business) activities. This is occurring despite the church being closed. After some discussion the following motions were made:
  - A letter is to be sent to the parish council / parish in general stating that Holy Trinity Church is closed and that no activities are to take place in buildings owned by the parish. Motion made by Deacon John and seconded by Fr. Timothy. **Unanimous vote in favor**
  - Liquidation / sale of all properties and buildings owned by Holy Trinity Church, McAdoo, PA. Motion made by Fr. Martin and seconded by Fr. Seraphim. **Unanimous vote in favor.**
    - **Additional Discussion / Explanation** – Per Fr. Timothy, McAdoo had asked to be closed until after Pascha. This request was granted by Archbishop Mark. During this time the parish was having reader services without the blessing of the hierarch. A meeting was held that included Fr. Timothy and the parish to discuss the financial requirements to keep the buildings open as the parish had stopped paying property insurance but were using the facilities. It was

noted that the rectory had a leaky roof and probably could not be insured. Church Mutual will add the McAdoo property to the diocesan policy until the sale of the property is completed (Mr. Tom Pickup, the individual who purchased the Lykens church has expressed interested in this property as well). Mark Linnehan will handle the transfer of the phone, sewer, water and electric bills to the diocese. Mark will also discuss junk removal with Mr. Pickup as well, but we would prefer to sell the property as is.

- Holy Trinity, McAdoo does have a cemetery, but it is not part of the sale.
- **COVID-19** – There was discussion on the impact of COVID – 19 on the churches in the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania. Because of fear, government mandated restrictions and shutdowns attendance and even giving is down. Weaker churches may flounder; stronger churches may have a different look / demographic following the lifting of restrictions. Archbishop Mark commented that there may need to be a discussion among the deans to identify “viable” parishes as well as potential closures. **Not firm date was discussed for this meeting.** As a result of the COVID-19 discussion and the church closures already noted, Fr. Nicholas suggested that all Annual Parish Meeting Minutes submitted to the diocese include a full listing of **all assets** (monetary as well as property). Archbishop Mark is to send a directive to the parish rectors.
- **Closing of Holy Trinity Church – Catasauqua, PA** – Attendance in Catasauqua is down to about a dozen people on a Sunday. There are 30 members over 60 years of age. Catasauqua has petitioned the diocese to be closed. A motion was made by Fr. Martin and seconded to close Holy Trinity as of 31 August 2020 with the final Diving Liturgy being October 2020. **The Motion passed unanimously.** A second motion to liquidate the parish was made by Deacon Peter Staller and seconded by Fr. Raymond. **The Motion passed unanimously.** Per Archbishop Mark, the decision to close Holy Trinity Church in Catasauqua has been affirmed by the Diocesan Council. The church cannot write checks without the approval of the ruling hierarch. This will be communicated to the parish council of Holy Trinity.
- **Seminarian Support** – Deacon John Black (Holy Trinity, Pottstown) has begun seminary studies at St. Vladimir’s Seminary. A motion was made by Fr. Martin and seconded by Fr. Victor to help defray moving and other expenses related to seminary with a \$1,500 charity gift. **The Motion passed unanimously.**

- **St. Tikhon's Summer Camp Records** – After a cordial discussion on obtaining financial and other records related to Camp, there now seems to be some resistance on the part of current and former camp directors and committee members on what needs to be turned over to the diocese. Financial records now seem to be the stumbling block. Archbishop Mark is to schedule a meeting with the current camp directors to discuss turning over **all** financial records relating to ST. Tikhon's summer camp.
- **Tax Exempt Status for the Diocesan Center in Bath, PA** – A hearing was held by the local government on the tax-exempt status of the diocesan center. The judge stated that the current ruling on what's considered tax exempt "made no sense". The offices in the lower level are taxed at a different rate than the "above ground" space. The parking lot and overall property are not considered. The judge will review all records and get back to our attorney in 30 days. The general feeling is that we will get a reduction in taxes.
- **Financials** – We currently have roughly \$60,000 in the diocesan savings account at an interest rate of 2%. The interest rate is expected to drop to under 1%. If we shift money to the Diocese of the South as a savings account, our interest rate would be 3.5%. Sixty thousand dollars far exceeds our working capital requirements. A motion was made by Mark Linnehan (seconded by Fr. Timothy) to move \$45,000 to the Diocese of the South's financial instrument. It should be noted that we already have money in an account with them. After some discussion in liquidity of this transfer, **the Motion passed unanimously.**

### **Action Items**

- Archbishop Mark to follow up with Church Mutual on getting a refund for remaining insurance premium held for Holy Trinity Church in McAdoo.
- Mark Linnehan will handle the transfer of the phone, sewer, water and electric bills from Holy Trinity, McAdoo to the diocese. Mark will also discuss junk removal with Mr. Pickup.
- Archbishop Mark to send communication to the parish rectors to include a complete listing of all parish assets with annual meeting minutes.
- Archbishop Mark is to schedule a meeting with the current camp directors to discuss turning over all financial records relating to ST. Tikhon's summer camp.
- Mark Linnehan to transfer \$45,000 to the account the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania has with the Diocese of the South's investment plan.

Respectively Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Skoog". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Protodeacon Peter N. Skoog