

DIOCESAN COUNCIL MINUTES
DIOCESE OF THE WEST
December 11, 2013

His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin convened a meeting of the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of the West at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA, at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 11, 2013.

Present: Archbishop Benjamin, Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Archpriest Basil Rhodes, Archpriest John Pierce, Archpriest Lawrence Russell, Archpriest Matthew Tate, Archpriest David Brum, Archpriest Anthony Karbo, Archpriest John Dresko, Archpriest Lawrence Margitich, Priest Damian Kuolt, Priest Andrew Cuneo, Deacon George Shumaik, Subdeacon Paul Pilipenko, Subdeacon Johann Morse, Mary Caetta, Dorothy Nowik, Ivan Pouschine. Guests: Monk Barnabas (Day), Andrew Smith, John DellaMonica, Scott Adams, Peter Schwalbenberg, and Subdeacon Dimitri Solodow.

Previous Minutes- The minutes of the October 8 & 10, 2013 meetings of the Diocesan Council were received.

Report of the Archbishop – His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin reported that he was very pleased with the recent clergy workshop as well as with the annual Diocesan Assembly which took place in Santa Rosa in October. He observed that the only real statutory purpose of the assemblies is to approve the annual diocesan budget but that so much more is also accomplished. The fellowship shared is the real major benefit for all who attend. He further reported on his busy travel schedule, apart from his trip to Turkey, he traveled 33 days since the beginning of October. During his visit to Turkey he had the opportunity to meet with the Patriarch of Constantinople for a brief, but meaningful, encounter. His Eminence also commented on his travel to parishes facing serious difficulties with clergy.

Concerning the Orthodox Church in America, the Archbishop commented on the changes that have taken place on the national level since last year's election of Metropolitan Tikhon. The Chancery Office in Syosset is running efficiently and facing the special challenges in regard to sexual misconduct cases. Sadly, these are all too many and take up too much time of the Holy Synod's agendas. Former Diocesan Assistant, Barry Migyanko, has stepped in to fill the chancery position left vacant by the untimely passing of Gregory Sulich (Memory Eternal!). The OCA has initiated a new version of the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards (FOS), which is now called "Stewards of the Orthodox Church in America" (SOCA); His Eminence encouraged those present to join.

His Eminence further observed that, in general, things are peaceful and going well within the Diocese. He also took the opportunity to remind all present that the Procedures, Standards, and Policies on Sexual Misconduct (PSP's) of the Orthodox Church in America were approved by the Holy Synod at its recent meeting. All members of the Diocesan Council are required to read them and will be asked to indicate that they have done so as part of their duties as members of the Diocesan Council. (<http://oca.org/PDF/official/2013-10-PSP-Sexual-Misconduct.pdf>)

Presentation of Gramota – Subdeacon Dimitri Solodow arrived as an invited guest. Archbishop Benjamin welcomed him and presented him with a diocesan gramota, which extends the gratitude of the Diocese of the West for his many years of dedicated service and offered best wishes and the assurance of prayer. Subdeacon Dimitri expressed his gratitude to those who have enabled him to serve the Diocese.

Report of the Treasurer – Mary Caetta, Diocesan Treasurer, noted that all had received the diocesan financial report through November and that everything is in good order. She called everyone’s attention to the executive summary that is also provided. Mary also reported that she is now “up and running” after her recent move. Additionally, it was noted that there were several items which had run over-budget in December. **MOTION:** It was moved and seconded (Nowik/Dresko) “That payment of Office Expenses and Travel as indicated in the diocesan financial report be paid from diocesan retained earnings.” The motion carried.

Mary also reported on the requests she had received from several persons for their diocesan-derived income to be designated as housing allowance. **MOTION:** It was moved and seconded (Brum/Nowik) “That the attached designations for housing allowance for Archbishop Benjamin, Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Archpriest Matthew Tate, Priest Boulos Khoury, Priest Andre Paez, Priest Damian Kuolt, and Priest Andrew Cuneo be accepted.” The motion carried.

In light of the needs for background checks on all those with fiduciary responsibility, Mary commented that it would be appropriate for the Diocese to perform a background check on the Diocesan Treasurer as part of due diligence. At this time it was also noted that background checks are to take place for all persons hoping to be promoted to any clerical order, notably reader and subdeacon. The parish will facilitate and pay for these checks; the Diocese pays for background checks performed on priests and deacons.

His Eminence reported that, at the request of the parish council, made in the form of a petition, St Peter the Aleut Mission, Lake Havasu, AZ, has been closed. All properties, including real property, are therefore transferred to the possession of the Diocese of the West; funds received by the Diocese will be used for expenses related to the maintenance of the property. **MOTION:** It was moved and seconded (Tate/Margitich) “That the Diocese of the West receive the funds and real property of the Lake Havasu Mission, in response to the petition for closure made by the Parish Council and the acceptance of that petition by His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin.” The motion carried. It was noted that a new category will be created within the diocesan financial statement to track the expenditures related to the maintenance of the property in Lake Havasu.

There was also discussion of expenditures related to the psychological evaluation of clergy, with a desire to place a ceiling on how much can be spent in such cases. **MOTION:** It was moved and seconded (Tate/Dresko) “That diocesan payments for diocesan-ordered psychological evaluations of clergy not exceed \$600 in each instance.” The motion carried.

In order to be able to close the books for 2013 in a timely manner, Mary requested that all receipts related to this meeting of the Diocesan Council be submitted to her before the end of the week.

Diocesan Charities and Appeals – Archpriest Lawrence Russell, Director of Diocesan Charities, reported on issues relating to diocesan charities and appeals, particularly in regard to the St Petersburg Children’s Hospice and the manner in which funds are transferred to them. Checks are to be sent to the Diocese which will, in turn, forward the funds to the group that coordinates and forwards donations to the Hospice. The diocese will be responsible for issuing certification of donations for tax purposes.

Around the Diocese – Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Diocesan Chancellor, led a discussion of the “good stuff” taking place across the Diocese of the West. He noted that the Diocesan Assembly went well and expressed gratitude to Archpriest Lawrence Margitich and the clergy and faithful of Saint Seraphim Church, Santa Rosa, for their generous hospitality. Additionally noted were the retreat/service trip to Project Mexico being coordinated by Archpriest Anthony Karbo; the clergy retreat scheduled for May; the beauty of the Church of the Annunciation in Santa Maria, CA; the stability of the mission in Hilo, HI; the willingness of Priest Damian Kuolt to assist where needed; the beginning of construction of the chapel at Saint Barbara Monastery, Santa Paula; and the beginning of wine sales by Holy Assumption Monastery, Calistoga.

Diocesan Loan Program (Orthodox Christian Capital Investment Fund/OCCIF) – John DellaMonica provided an update on the work of OCCIF. Also present for the report was Scott Adams, treasurer and member of the OCCIF board. John noted that there are two points to consider in this update since his report at the Diocesan Assembly in October, both points concerning the need for information. First, there is a need to, in cooperation with the Diocesan Mission Board, circulate a complete survey/needs assessment of the mission communities within the Diocese. Of particular importance is ascertaining the financial needs of each mission. A similar survey/needs assessment should also be done on the level of the parishes. The two surveys are necessarily different as needs are generally different, especially in regards to financial needs. John then requested 1) permission to enlist help to foster involvement by the diocesan mission and parish communities, and 2) to once again, as at the Diocesan Assembly, request assistance with OCCIF and the proposed surveys. This second request follows upon his similar request made at the Diocesan Assembly and to which there was no response. It was decided that Priest Damian Kuolt will facilitate the gathering of information for the proposed surveys. Archbishop Benjamin will send a letter to all diocesan clergy soliciting assistance from those who have the specific talents and qualifications that are necessary.

Proportional Giving – Archpriest Matthew Tate and Archpriest John Dresko led a discussion of the Diocese’s transition to proportional giving as a means of funding its work and the work of the OCA, as resolved at the 2013 Diocesan Assembly. It was agreed that the January 2014 parish financial reports will be used to determine “actual numbers” that will be presented to the Diocesan Council in March. This will provide for further discussion and determination concerning this transition.

Continuing Clergy Education – Father Ian MacKinnon spoke of the OCA annual requirement for 20 hours of continuing education by all clergy in the OCA, as decided upon by the Holy Synod. He noted that everyone should already be aware of this and that further information is available on the OCA website. The website provides information concerning the requirements and manner of fulfilling these requirements. (<http://oca.org/about/departments/department-of-continuing-education>). Fr Ian further noted that many of our diocesan clergy are already participating.

Communications – Archpriest John Dresko, Director of the Diocesan Department of Communications requested greater participation by all clergy and parishes in providing information, news, photos, etc., for our diocesan website. He asked that everyone emulate Fr Anthony Karbo in this regard.

2014 Diocesan Assembly – The 2014 Diocesan Assembly will be held in at Saints Peter and Paul Church, Phoenix, AZ, October 7-9, 2014. Archpriest David Brum reported that planning for the Assembly has already begun.

Auxiliary Bishop – With the blessing of His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, Archpriest Matthew Tate introduced the following motion: It was moved and seconded (Tate/MacKinnon) “That the Diocesan Council express its unanimous support to the recommendation by Archbishop Benjamin to the Holy Synod of Bishops for the election of Archpriest David Brum as Auxiliary Bishop for the Diocese of the West.” The motion carried unanimously.

OCA Pension Board – Archpriest Matthew Tate reported on the status of the OCA Pension and the work of its board. He noted that parish payments into the pension plan will increase 2%, (from 6% to 8%) beginning in February 2014 and that pension participant payments will remain at 6%. This provides for a 14% contribution rate which is the industry standard. This slight increase addresses the 2008 & 2011 market downslide and will provide an increase of payouts to retirees. Fr Matthew also observed that the clergy participation level is increasing, noting that it is mandated for all within the OCA.

Raphael House, Portland – Fr Tate reported that Raphael House, Portland, OR, is doing well and is facing the same financial challenges faced by all non-profits at this time.

Seminary Visitations – Fr Tate reported that the annual visitations to Saint Tikhon’s and Saint Vladimir’s Seminaries is scheduled for mid-February. He and Archpriest David Brum will visit the two seminaries and meet with seminarians from the Diocese. This annual visit always provides a further sense of connection between the Diocese and those who may be called to serve within it.

Synaxis of the Theotokos – For the sake of the record, it was noted that the members of the Board of the Synaxis of the Theotokos are: His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, CEO; Peter Schwalbenburg, Secretary, Mary Caetta, Treasurer, and Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Archpriest Matthew Tate, and Subdeacon Johan Morse, Members of the Board.

Lifegiving Springs Retreat – The members of the Board are Archbishop John Dresko, President; Archbishop Matthew Tate, Secretary, and Priest Damian Kuolt, Treasurer. Fr Dresko provided an update on LGS. The purchasers of LGS have defaulted on the mortgage carried by the Diocese. The attorney representing the Diocese in this matter has been in discussion with a party interested in purchasing the property. He is now requesting a plan from the Diocese as to how to proceed with this potential buyer. Discussion ensued as to the nature of the potential sale: priority would be \$1.3 million cash or negotiating continued terms of the previous loan, with 25% down payment and a 5% interest rate. The party in default will be held harmless upon a mutually beneficial agreement. Possibly only a title transfer, which would by-pass the foreclosure procedure, saving time and money. It was also noted that to-date the attorney representing the Diocese has charged only \$1,500.00 for services rendered.

Metropolitan Council – Archbishop John Dresko, diocesan clergy representative on the Metropolitan Council noted that no meeting has taken place since our October Diocesan Assembly. The request to support SOCA was reiterated.

Annual Pilgrimage to Fort Ross – The annual diocesan pilgrimage to Fort Ross was discussed. It was noted that the fee paid to the California Parks Department for this event is \$1,000.00. The consensus was that this annual event should continue and that, in the future, this be considered a diocesan event and reflected as such in the diocesan budget.

Project Mexico – Archbishop Anthony Karbo provided information about the diocesan-wide trip to Project Mexico, scheduled for July 15-21, 2014. In addition to the good work that will be accomplished at Project Mexico, the trip will focus on the youth of the Diocese and will promote vocations to various ministries in the Church. It was emphasized that this is a diocesan-offered, diocesan-wide trip. Fr Anthony encouraged the participation of all parishes of the Diocese and distributed an informational flier; more information is also available on the diocesan website: (http://dowoca.org/news_131124_1.html).

Mission Deanery Retreat -- The Mission Deanery Retreat will be held February 11-14, 2014.

Future Diocesan Council Meetings – The next two meetings of the Diocesan Council are scheduled as follows: March 11, 2014; and June 11, 2014. All meetings are held at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA, and begin at 10:30 a.m. Meetings of the Chancellor's Advisory Committee will be held at Holy Trinity Cathedral the day prior to each Diocesan Council meeting and will convene at 2:30 p.m. The next **Diocesan Assembly** will be hosted at Saints Peter and Paul Church, Phoenix, Arizona, October 7-9, 2014.

Adjournment - His Eminence adjourned the meeting of the Diocesan Council at 1:36 p.m.

Attachment as noted above.