

DIOCESAN COUNCIL MINUTES
DIOCESE OF THE WEST
March 11, 2014

His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin convened a regular meeting of the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of the West at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA, at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 11, 2014.

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 Antony Dyl, Deacon George Shumaik, Subdeacon Paul Pilipenko, Subdeacon Johann Morse, Mary Caetta, Dorothy Nowik, Ivan Pouschine. Guests: Monk Barnabas (Day), Andrew Smith, and Peter Schwalbenburg.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - The previously-distributed minutes of the December 11, 2013 meeting of the Diocesan Council were received.

REPORT OF THE ARCHBISHOP – His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin reviewed current developments in the life of the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Church in America, and the Diocese of the West. Highlights of this report included the good news that the Syrian nuns who had been held captive by rebel forces were released on the Sunday of Orthodoxy. The primates of the Local Autocephalous Churches (not including, however, Metropolitan Rastislav of the Czech Lands and Slovakia or Metropolitan Tikhon) met during the first week of Great Lent to prepare for the Great and Holy Council that is to be held in Istanbul in 2016. His Eminence noted that, in his opening statement to the gathered Primate, Patriarch Kyrill lamented the absence of the Primates of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia and the Orthodox Church in America. The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States is scheduled to meet in Dallas in September. A committee has been entrusted with devising a plan for division of canonically-designated territories with one archbishop and five or six metropolitans, with diocesan bishops “under” the metropolitans. While Metropolitan Tikhon is not part of the Assembly’s executive committee, he has been invited to its meetings. His Eminence also spoke of the Sunday of Orthodoxy celebration which was hosted by Bishop Maxim at Saint Stephen’s Cathedral, Alhambra, CA, and participated in by Metropolitan Gerasimos, Archbishop Joseph, and himself. Next year, the West Coast hierarchs will serve the Divine Liturgy of the Sunday of Orthodoxy in their own churches, but will participate in a joint Vespers service to be held at Saint Seraphim Church, Santa Rosa, CA. Bishop David (Mahaffey) was recently consecrated and installed as Bishop of Alaska; Archbishop Benjamin’s long-term responsibilities as *Locum tenens* have been fulfilled. Bishop David has been invited to be present for the celebration of Pentecost at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco. Archbishop Benjamin also noted that he recently participated in the enthronement of the new Primate of the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia, Metropolitan Rastislav. Further, His Eminence noted that the situation with Life Giving Spring Retreat Center continues to develop and will be addressed during our meeting; the monasteries in the diocese are doing well. The Archbishop also provided background information on a group of a formerly-Coptic community of women

who have been received into the Orthodox Church and possible options for their future relationship with the Diocese of the West. The Personal Assistance Program (PAP) is available for any clergy, church workers, or their families who may be in need of the assistance which this program provides, including coverage for counseling, etc. More information can be found on the diocesan and OCA websites. His Eminence expressed his gratitude to Father Damian Kuolt and Matushka Joanna for their willingness to serve various parishes throughout the diocese which are in need of pastoral attention; Father David Lowell should be returning from his sabbatical in November of this year.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER – Mary Caetta, Diocesan Treasurer, noted that all had received the diocesan financial report through February and that everything is in good order. She called everyone’s attention to the executive summary that is also provided with the monthly report and noted that its format has been changed, making it less “wordy” and more concise. The internal audit of diocesan financial records of FY2013 is scheduled to take place at Saint Christina Church, Fremont, on May 5; Archpriest David Brum, Subdeacon Paul Pilipenko, and Maha Estephan comprise the Diocesan Audit Committee. Mary brought to the council’s attention that there is still \$3,244.00 in the Martha & Mary House fund. After discussion, a motion was made concerning disposition of these funds.

Motion: It was moved and seconded (Tate/Kuolt) “That the \$3244.00 in the Martha & Mary House fund be designated for scholarships and transferred to the diocesan “Scholarship Fund.” The motion carried.

There was also discussion about the possibility of organizing a conference/workshop for diocesan treasurers, possibly in advance of and conjunction with the annual diocesan assembly. Lastly, the funds remaining from the closure of Saint Peter the Aleut Mission, Lake Havasu, AZ, are being maintained separately from diocesan funds, as it is a separate corporation. Oversight of these funds and administration of the property in Lake Havasu must be provided for.

Motion: It was moved and seconded (Tate/Dresko) “That His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin appoint officers for the Saint Peter the Aleut Corporation.” Motion carried.

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. His Eminence has designated the Children’s Hospice as the beneficiary of the 2014 Lenten Appeal. 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.

REPORT OF THE CHANCELLOR - Around the Diocese – Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Diocesan Chancellor, led a discussion of what is taking place around the Diocese. He noted that:

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Archbishop Benjamin’s consecration to the episcopacy as well as his sixtieth birthday; the five years that Archbishop Benjamin served as *Locum tenens* of the Diocese of the West have come to an end. The Diocese of Alaska is grateful for his attentions and leadership during this period. Everyone in the Diocese is also glad that his

responsibilities in that area have been successfully completed; The issue concerning the man who protested his adult son's entrance into the Orthodox Church has been resolved through the son's reception into the Church; Matushka Judy Frakes is grateful for the support with which the diocese has provided her and Father Hilarion Frakes is in daily contact with Father Ian and seems to be doing better; The Coptic community seems like it has good potential for the further development of monastic life in the Diocese; The former Saint Christina of Tyre Mission, Fremont, was recently granted parish status and is now part of the Central Pacific Deanery; Father Lawrence Russell has served as confessor of the monastic communities in Santa Paula and Santa Rosa for ten years now, in addition to serving as diocesan confessor; Father Edward Henderson has been assigned as the new priest in Berkeley. Father Alexis Baldwin is having a good internship experience in Colorado Springs- his thank you letter to the Diocesan Council was presented by Father Anthony Karbo; Two new priests- Father David Morrison, Bozeman, MT, and Father Andreas Blom, Ashland, OR, are doing well and proving to be very effective in their assignments.

His Eminence added that he feels very blessed with the clergy in the Diocese of the West, noting that our diocese maintains a shared vision and that unity of spirit and purpose exists among the clergy. His Eminence also expressed his gratitude- and that of the Diocese- to Father Ian for his dedication and commitment to his work as chancellor.

OCCIF (ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT FUND) – No report at this time.

FINANCE COMMITTEE – Dorothy Nowik noted that there was nothing to report at this time.

STATUS OF PROPORTIONAL GIVING – Fathers Tate and Dresko reported that information is still being gathered. Numbers will be available at our next meeting for further discussion, review, and development. Father Matthew Tate, commenting on the recent meeting of Chancellors and Treasurers of the OCA (he represented Fr Ian MacKinnon at this recent meeting in Syosset) noted that, as part of the change to proportional giving, the Diocese will determine what percentage will be provided to the OCA for support of the Central Administration. This work will continue. Father Dresko is a member of the Metropolitan Council's Finance Committee.

CONTINUING CLERGY EDUCATION – His Eminence encouraged everyone to update their continuing education units on the department website. The website provides information concerning the requirements and the manner in which these requirements are fulfilled. Father Ian further noted that many of our diocesan clergy are already participating. (<http://oca.org/about/departments/department-of-continuing-education>).

PARISH AND MONASTERY MORTGAGES AND LOANS – Culver City payments are current. Saint John of San Francisco Monastery, Manton, CA, is managing to stay current in payment of its interest-only \$750K mortgage. It was reported that the interest rate on this loan will increase in two years; the holders of the mortgage also have the opportunity to call in the loan at any time. Discussion took place concerning the need to protect this asset. This discussion was based not only on the property itself (70-80K has been expended in

improvements, but the mortgage has not been paid down) but also upon the importance of the only male monastic community in the Diocese. A proposal for discussion and action will be presented at the next meeting of the Diocesan Council.

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 noted that Fr Karbo is consistent in providing news and information. He also discussed spoke of the interactive parish map on the diocesan website. There was also discussion about the possibility of providing a bi-annual pdf. Format newsletter of diocesan events and news that could be downloaded locally and distributed to parishioners who do not use the internet.

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 is taking place.

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 saw an increase 2%, (from 6% to 8%) beginning in February and that pension participant payments will remain at 6%. This provides for a 14% contribution rate. Fr Matthew also observed that the clergy participation level is increasing, again noting that it is mandated for all clergy within the OCA. The Pension Board will meet with the Holy Synod at its meeting later in March. At that time, the Pension Board hopes to encourage greater participation by all the Dioceses of the Church; the Diocese of the West has an almost 100% participation rate.

RAPHAEL HOUSE, PORTLAND – Fr Tate reported that Raphael House, Portland, OR, is doing well but continues to face the same financial challenges which confront all non-profits at this time.

SEMINARY VISITATIONS – Fr Tate reported that the annual visitations to Saint Tikhon's and Saint Vladimir's Seminaries took place in mid-February. He and Archpriest David Brum visited the two seminaries and met with seminarians from the Diocese, as well as with other seminarians who simply wanted to "explore their options." These annual visits provide the diocese with greater insight into those who are preparing for ministry. It was noted that the seminarians are extremely grateful for the financial support which is available to them from the Diocese.

SYNAXIS OF THE THEOTOKOS – Rental rates were recently increased. It was noted that there is a need to stay ahead of capital improvements. Johann Morse will see to an energy usage evaluation/audit.

LIFE GIVING SPRING – Father Dresko provided an update on LGS and reported that he is waiting to receive the paperwork for the formal and legal foreclosure on the property. The forms have all been filed and there is an anticipated 90-day turnaround. It was noted that the group which is being foreclosed on may be under the impression that the diocese still owns the property. However, they are still liable for insurance as well as for any taxes until the

foreclosure is finalized. Other options for the disposition or use of the property must now be considered.

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL – Archpriest John Dresko, diocesan clergy representative on the Metropolitan Council, reported that the most recent meeting of the Metropolitan Council was “routine.” He noted the recent announcement concerning the Archbishop Seraphim verdict in Canada. There was also \$1M given as a grant to the OCA for the development of missions; it was decided that this would be established as an endowment dedicated to mission work. Discussion of sexual misconduct issues also took place, as well as the role of mental health experts. Plans for the 2015 AAC in 2015 was also presented and discussed.

OCA STATUTE REVISION – Archpriest David Brum reported on the recent work of the Statute Revision Task Force, of which he is a member. Its first face-to-face meeting was held in Phoenix in January; other meetings are scheduled and the work continues between meetings via conference calls, email communications, etc. It is hoped that a website/blog will be established once enough work has been completed, reviewed by the Holy Synod, and is ready for posting. A stated desire of the Task Force is that all those who are interested will be able to review the work being accomplished in a timely manner and have the opportunity for input as the process unfolds. A presentation on the revision will be made at the Diocesan Assembly in October.

PILGRIMAGE TO FORT ROSS – The annual diocesan pilgrimage to Fort Ross will be held July 4, 2014. It was noted that the fee paid to the California Parks Department for this annual event is \$1,000.00. As noted in the minutes of the December 2013 meeting of the Diocesan Council, 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 – Archpriest Anthony Karbo provided further information about the service trip to Project Mexico, scheduled for July 15-21, 2014. He reported that 103 persons have signed up to participate. Archbishop Benjamin and several other clergy from the diocese will be in attendance and make presentations, including Father Basil Rhodes and Father Andrew Cuneo. 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 emphasize developing their vocations in the Church early-on. More information is also available on the diocesan website: (http://dowoca.org/news_131124_1.html).

MISSION DEANERY RETREAT -- The Mission Deanery Retreat took place February 11-14, 2014. It was well attended and appreciated by those who participated.

OTHER- Discussion took place concerning Obamacare and its possible effect on clergy, church workers, and their families. Also discussed were various parishes currently facing challenges, notably communities in the Los Angeles area. The Archbishop also spoke about recent transfers and possible parish openings within the Diocese.

Next Diocesan Council Meeting – The next meeting of the Diocesan Council will take place at Holy Trinity Cathedral on Wednesday, June 11, 2014, at 10:30 a.m. The meeting of the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee will be held the previous day at 2:30 p.m. In light of His

Eminence's tenth anniversary of consecration and his sixtieth birthday, plans will be made for a celebration to take place after the Diocesan Council meeting on June 11. Further information will be forthcoming.

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 2:00 p.m.