

DIOCESE OF THE WEST

DIOCESAN COUNCIL MINUTES

March 6, 2013

With the singing of “O Heavenly King,” His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin convened a meeting of the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of the West at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, California, at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 6, 2013.

Present: Archbishop Benjamin, Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Archpriest Basil Rhodes, Archpriest Lawrence Russell, Archpriest John Pierce, Archpriest Matthew Tate, Archpriest David Lowell, Archpriest David Brum, Archpriest Anthony Karbo, Archpriest John Dresko, Archpriest Lawrence Margitich, Archpriest Michael Anderson, Archpriest John Strickland, Priest Damian Kuolt, Priest Andrew Cuneo, Subdeacon Wesley Smith, Mary Caetta, Dorothy Nowik, and Ivan Pouschine. Also present were Monk Barnabas and Andrew Smith, Diocesan Administrative Assistant.

Previous Minutes- Approval of the minutes of the December 20, 2013 meeting of the Diocesan Council was deferred until later in the meeting.

Report of the Archbishop – His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin reiterated his gratitude to God for the good work and commitment to the Church of the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Diocese of the West. He happily noted that he anticipates less travel outside the Diocese since the election of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon. He commented on the ongoing “negotiations” with retired Metropolitan Jonah. He also reported on various issues and challenges currently faced by the Holy Synod. His Eminence also spoke about his representing the OCA at the recent enthronement of Patriarch John X of Antioch and of his anticipated trip to the Church of the Czech Lands and Slovakia. His Eminence noted that building and maintaining good relations with our sister Orthodox Churches, especially the smaller ones, is very important. His Eminence reported that a number of clergy assignments and reassignments are in the planning and will take place in the months to come and that there are some parish issues that need to be addressed, with the help of the diocesan chancellor and local deans. The Holy Synod has recently established the *OCA Department of Continuing Education*. Approximately twenty hours per year will be required of all clergy; however, the details of this still need to be worked out. Metropolitan Tikhon has accepted Archbishop Benjamin’s invitation to make his first primatial visit to the Diocese of the West and to be present at Holy Trinity Cathedral for the celebration of Pentecost. It is possible that one or two other visits in the Bay Area may also be arranged. Closing his report, the Archbishop expressed his gratitude to Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, diocesan chancellor, to the local deans, to his personal staff, Andrew Smith and Monk Barnabas, as well as for the continued counsel and support of the members of the Diocesan Council.

Report of the Treasurer – Mary Caetta, Diocesan Treasurer, reviewed the 2013 YTD Diocesan Budget (through February) and reported that all is in good order. St John Monastery is making payments on its loan from the Diocese. She noted that, with the exception of Corvalis; St Nicholas, Portland; Los Angeles; Tarzana; and Berkeley, all 2012 parish reports have been

received. Deans are asked to follow up with those parishes which have not yet submitted their 2012 financial reports. The information received from parishes will provide essential information to the finance committee and provide the data necessary to proceed with discussions concerning future possible methods of financing the work of the Diocese. St John Monastery, Manton, continues to make payments on its loan. \$15,000.00 in back assessments was received from Livermore (leaving a balance of \$1,500.00) and \$6,000.00 has been received from HVM Cathedral, LA, in full payment of back assessments. All is going well with Synaxis of the Theotokos and receipts and expenditures are within budget; monies are already budgeted for pending repairs. His Eminence thanked Mary Caetta for her continued good work as Treasurer of the Diocese.

Projects/Events of Note in the Diocese – Father Ian MacKinnon, Chancellor, led a discussion of the current projects and events of note in the Diocese. The Mission Deanery recently held its annual mission retreat at Annunciation Church, Milwaukie, OR. Fr David Rucker, staff member at OCMC, was the featured speaker. St Seraphim Church, Santa Rosa, hosted a liturgical music/singing seminar at the beginning of February, led by Dr Mark Bailey. Another seminar will be hosted at the beginning of June. More information is available at saintseraphim.com.

Old Business –

Finance Committee - Dorothy Nowik, member of the diocesan finance committee, noted that, due to the number of seminarians who will be ordained and assigned within the diocese, it is necessary to approve an increase in this line item of the 2013 diocesan budget. **Motion:** It was moved and seconded (Brum/Pierce) “That the line item within the current diocesan budget designated for moving expenses be increased from \$10,000.00 to \$20,000.00.” Motion carried.

Saint John Monastery- Fr Matthew Tate reported on the financial situation of St John Monastery, Manton, and noted that the financial documents and records were reviewed at a recent visit to the monastery by Fr Ian MacKinnon, Fr John Dresko, and himself. Archbishop Benjamin noted that the monastery is now being administered by the monastic brotherhood council and that decisions are being made as a community. Fr Tate reported that the monastery has agreed not to assume any additional credit card debt and that it is anticipated that the diocesan loan will be paid in full within five years. The monastery does well in its sale of books and religious items. The new building has been “mothballed” in order to cut down on expenses. There is an outstanding debt of \$62,000.00 in auto loans for three automobiles. It was noted that the property is not owned by the diocese and that the current mortgage, being carried by the former owners, is presently an interest-only mortgage; the note can be called in at any time and \$750,000.00 is still owed. It was acknowledged that, although this is not a diocesan property, the diocese is clearly involved from a moral and canonical standpoint. Discussion ensued as to how to best address this matter. Possibly a new loan can be negotiated with the diocese as a co-signer in order to pay off the outstanding 750K. The general consensus was that the diocese would be prepared to cosign such a loan, provided the terms of the loan were acceptable. It was additionally noted that the monies expended on behalf of the monastery from Archimandrite Meletios’ personal funds should be paid back to him, although he has not specifically requested this. It was suggested that, before further follow-up, Fr Meletios express his desires in this

regard in a written communication to the Archbishop. Fr Tate also provided the members of the Diocesan Council with a written summary of the monastery's current financial status.

Communications - Archpriest John Dresko, Director of Diocesan Communications, noted that everything is up to date. As always, the diocesan website depends upon the submissions it receives from parish and mission communities. Clergy and parishes are encouraged to be more proactive in this regard.

Metropolitan Council – Fr David Lowell reported on the recent meeting of the Metropolitan Council. The 18th All American Council has been scheduled to be a summer event in 2015. Fr David noted that the quality of life at the chancery office in Syosset is good and that the chancery is running smoothly. He also reported that there is an anticipated \$188,000.00 deficit in the current OCA budget, due to a decline in census and the reduction of assessments. The OCA continues its planning to move to a proportional giving plan for financing its work. The recent diocesan chancellors and diocesan treasurers meeting in Syosset was a repeat of last year's similar meeting. It should be acknowledged that the Diocese of the West and the Diocese of the South have been influential in raising consciousness about better ways to fund the works of the OCA on a church-wide level. Fr David also reported that there is to be a revitalization of fundraising efforts to fund supplementary works and that the old "Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards – FOS" is being reestablished under a new name; however, there will not be a fulltime paid director. Fr David also spoke about the strategic plan and noted that some of the work anticipated by the plan is already taking place in the Diocese of the West on the deanery level. Because of his impending sabbatical, Fr David will not be able to complete his term of office on the Metropolitan Council. Archbishop Benjamin thanked him for his good work and dedication. His Eminence appointed Fr John Dresko to fill out the remainder of Fr Lowell's term. It was noted that Deacon Anthony Dyl is not always able to attend meetings of the Diocesan Council; however, his participation in the meetings of the Metropolitan Council is deeply appreciated.

Parish Loans – His Eminence informed the council that the diocese will review the status of the loan made to the Merced mission. The diocese will remain open to returning the (simple) interest to Merced at such time as it can be used for a project that will benefit the growth of the mission. Discussion followed; however, for the immediate future, this will be placed on the "back burner." It was noted that Culver City is current in repayment of its loan. His Eminence has spoken with Mother Melania in Calistoga and reported that the community currently has only daily living expenses. It was reported that the monastery needs some assistance in providing a better format for its financial reports to the diocese so that its true financial status can be more effectively assessed.

2013 Diocesan Assembly - The 2013 Diocesan Assembly is being hosted at Saint Seraphim Church, Santa Rosa, October 8-10. A clergy retreat/conference will be held the previous afternoon/evening, October 7. As Fr Zechariah of Essex was unable to accept the invitation to speak to at the assembly, His Eminence will invite Fr Ian Pac-Urar, Chairman of the OCA Department of Continuing Education to be the speaker. Arrangements and schedule will be forthcoming in a timely manner.

OCA Pension Board – Fr Tate reported that all is well with the OCA Pension Board

Diocesan Charities and Appeals – It was noted that both the annual Lenten Appeal and the Pascha Appeal for Project Mexico are being prepared and will soon be sent.

Raphael House – Fr Tate noted that there is nothing to report.

Parish and Clergy Screening Update – The Archbishop commented on the importance of this and Andrew Smith, Diocesan Administrative Assistant, provided an update on clergy and parish compliance.

Diocesan Loan Program (OCCIF) – It was noted that OCCIF can play a crucial, helpful role in providing loans to communities within the Diocese of the West. Final touches are being made to the OCCIF website, final licensing is pending, and a capital campaign is being planned. It was noted that OCCIF is not yet able to receive money from investors; this should change in the near future.

Lifegiving Spring – Mary Caetta reported that payments are not current; however, the Diocese is receiving late payment fees. LGS has applied for a historic site property grant. Fr John Dresko noted that the purchasers have suffered some setbacks but still intend to maintain and improve the property. It is hoped that relations with the city of Boulder Creek will improve under a new city manager. It is also hoped that, with patience, all will work out for the good. Fr Dresko will be in contact with the purchasers to clarify the issue of non-payment.

Deanery Camps – Those involved in local deanery camps provided an update. The annual celebration at Fort Ross will be held on July 4th.

New Business -

Parish Discussions – The Deans reported on various parish activities. Fr Basil Rhodes presented a letter from the Parish Council of St Innocent, Livermore, requesting a 50% decrease in its DPA for 2012-2013. This request was based upon several parish concerns. Mary Caetta noted that the 2013 DPA had not yet been calculated. **Motion:** It was moved and seconded (Rhodes/Margitich) “That the DPA for St Innocent Church, Livermore, be reduced 50% for the 2013 calendar year and that there be a follow up review.” Motion Carried; one abstention, Subdeacon Wesley Smith.

Proportional Giving – A discussion was led by Fr John Dresko. Concerning true tithing serving as the basis for proportional giving, a discussion took place as to what is included in consideration of that tithe, determining its sources, etc. Mary Caetta will provide a report on income based on 10% being received from the parishes, not including restricted funds, capital improvement funds, or bequests. Fathers Dresko and Tate will continue their work in this area and make a presentation at the June meeting of the Diocesan Council for approval for distribution to the parishes for review and discussion and in preparation for a report and recommendation to be presented at the 2013 Diocesan Assembly for action.

Seminary Visits – Fr Tate reported that he and Fr Rhodes recently visited Saint Tikhon’s Seminary and Saint Vladimir’s Seminary and met with students from the Diocese of the West. The list of diocesan seminarians was distributed and reviewed. It was noted how much the seminarians appreciate these visits and the ability to discuss their future service in the Diocese of the West.

Scholarships – Motion: It was moved and seconded (Tate/Rhodes) “That, based upon the annual diocesan budget and at the discretion of the diocesan hierarch, scholarships be made available to “non-priesthood track” seminarians (i.e. seminary students not preparing for ordination to the Holy Priesthood).” Motion carried. Funding of seminarians will also be discussed at the next meeting of the Diocesan Council.

Parish Openings – His Eminence reported on current and pending parish openings and reported that all seminarians who are graduating this spring will be ordained and assigned.

Mission Deanery Service/Housing Allowance – Father Matthew Tate spoke about Fr Damian Kuolt’s service to the Mission Deanery. **Motion:** It was moved and seconded (Tate/Dresko) “That, Fr Damian Kuolt, who serves as supply priest in the Mission Deanery, be allocated a housing allowance of up to \$48,000.00 for the present calendar year.” Motion carried.

Minutes of Previous Diocesan Council Meeting – The minutes of the Diocesan Council meeting of December 20, 2013, were received and approved as previously distributed.

Next Diocesan Council Meeting - The next meeting of the Diocesan Council is scheduled for June 6, 2013, at 10:30 a.m. at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA. The meeting of the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee will take place the day prior (June 5), beginning at 2:30 p.m. A meeting of the Deans will be held on Friday, June 7.

Adjournment - His Eminence adjourned the meeting of the Diocesan Council at 2:10 p.m.