

**Diocesan Council Meeting
Diocese of the West
Thursday, April 26, 2012
Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, CA**

Diocesan Council Members, Deans Present: His Grace, BENJAMIN, Bishop of the Diocese of the West; Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Chancellor; Mary Caetta, Treasurer; Archpriest David Lowell, Secretary; Archpriests Michael Anderson, David Brum, John Dresko, Anthony Karbo, Lawrence Margitich, John Pierce, Basil Rhodes, John Strickland, Christopher Swanson and Matthew Tate; Sub-deacons Paul Pilipenko and Dmitri Solodow, Maha Estephan and Ivan Pouschine.

Also Present: Archpriest David Thatcher, Rick Ashley, Andrew Smith.

I. The meeting was called to order at 10:30am with the singing of “Christ is Risen”.

II. the minutes of the previous meeting held on December 15, 2011 were reviewed and accepted with one correction:

Under Old Business, Section VI, E – Sub-deacon Dmitri Solodow should not be listed as a generally elected Lay Delegate for the term that expires in 2012. Sub-deacon Dmitri is on the Diocesan Council by virtue of being our Metropolitan Council lay delegate. The second lay delegate position for the term expiring in 2012 is currently vacant.

III. Report of His Grace, Bishop Benjamin, Ruling Hierarch, Diocese of the West

A. His Grace noted the good working relationship Fr. John Jillions, our new OCA Chancellor, has with His Beatitude, the Chancery and the Holy Synod as a whole. The next Holy Synod meeting will be in early May in conjunction with the consecration of the new Hierarch for the Bulgarian Diocese, Bishop-elect Alexander Golitzin.

B. The annual celebration at Fort Ross will *not* be held on July 4th as usual. Instead, the celebration will be held on Saturday, August 25th, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Fort. A bi-lingual Hierarchical Liturgy will be served in the Chapel at Fort Ross. His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah will preside. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsky, the head of the Russian Church’s Department of External Affairs, will also be serving along with His Grace Bishop Benjamin, Metropolitan Hilarion of ROCOR, Archbishop Kyrill of San Francisco, and Archbishop Justinian of the Moscow Patriarchate. Liturgy will begin at 10:00am., and there will be a procession around the Fort and a blessing of the cemetery. We expect between 1,000 and 1,500 people to attend. His Grace expects we will not be eating until around 3:00pm. Food will be available for sale, and people can bring their own food as well.

C. Bishop Benjamin has visited three of our four monasteries so far this year. His Grace blessed the property outside of Bozeman, Montana that is being donated for use as a monastery. Preliminary plans have been drawn up for buildings. It will be a skete of St. John's Monastery.

D. Archbishop Yuraj of the Czech Republic has accepted the invitation to visit Colorado, where many Slovaks settled a century ago, and will join us at our 2012 Diocesan Assembly this October in Denver, CO.

IV. Report of the Treasurer

A. Mary Caetta reported that all parishes have submitted their 2011 Financial Reports.

As of the end of March, checking and savings accounts total \$545,053.00. Accounts Receivable (assessment receivables and loans) total \$560,748.00.

The Treasurer's Report was received. Executive summaries and balance sheets are posted on the Diocese of the West website.

B. A discussion was held on the progress and challenges we have in moving towards a proportional giving system. Should we make an exception for capital campaigns for construction? The Diocese of the South does not. This is still an open question for us. Generalized "building funds" that cover upkeep and maintenance, however, are part of general operations. It will be essential for the success of a proportional basis for giving that we understand it really means tithing on all operating income. We hope to have a thorough proposal and plan ready by this summer which we can present to the Diocese at the Assembly in October.

V. Old Business

A. Diocesan Loan Program (OCCIF)

Rick Ashley reported on the progress of the Diocesan Loan Program. OCCIF has made its first loan to the Santa Rosa Parish using funds loaned to OCCIF by the Russian Women's Home of Mercy.

Parishes seeking loans will need financial statements that comply with Generally Accepted Accounting Practices which is more than what most parishes do currently. This may come as a surprise to parishes who expect that a diocesan-sponsored loan program can be conducted more informally than what banks require. The reality is that OCCIF loans out money that it borrows from others and is therefore subject to stringent state regulations that require generally accepted fiscal documentation.

Mary Caetta will be working with all parish treasurers to establish procedures that conform with Generally Accepted Accounting Practices.

B. Merced Property and Loan

Archpriest David Thatcher reported on the progress being made to sell the property in Merced. The parish of St. Mary Magdalene in Merced was given a loan of \$287,258.00 in August of 2009. The loan and accrued interest is due when the property is sold. The loan has been accruing interest and as of February, principal and interest total \$362,134.00.

Fr. Thatcher said the parish has received a serious offer, and they hope to have it sold this summer at which time the parish will be able to pay off its debt to the Diocese. Fr. Thatcher also asked the Diocesan Council to look at charging simple interest rather than compound interest.

It was moved and seconded (Tate/Margitich):

1) that the 2009 loan of \$287,258.00 at 10% interest per year made to St. Mary Magdalene Parish will be computed using simple interest;

2) that proceeds from the sale which remain in the parish after loan repayment will be restricted to building purchase only, not to be used for operational expenses;

3) that Mary Caetta will recalculate the amount owed based on simple interest.

The motion passed unanimously.

C. Life-Giving Spring Retreat Center

Archpriest John Dresko reported that the Retreat Center in Boulder City is scheduled to close on an offer of 1.3 million dollars on June 15th. The LGS Corporation will be carrying the mortgage for five years due in full on June 15, 2017.

D. Metropolitan Council

Sub-deacon Dmitri Solodow reported that the Treasurers and Chancellors for all the Dioceses met at the OCA Chancery in January. The meeting was part of our effort to understand the financial situations in each diocese as we move towards the implementation of the resolution made at the 16th AAC that we come up with new means for funding central church administration. The Department Chairs also were present for the first part of the meeting.

The Metropolitan Council supports the Chancery's and Holy Synod's desire that we have timely and effective responses to allegations of sexual abuse and has funded a position for a trained professional to carry out investigations as needed.

Fr. David Lowell stated that the officers at the Chancery do a tremendous amount of work. Even if we may differ as to where primary responsibility should rest on some

matters – diocese or chancery – the fact remains that we can be confident in the productivity of our chancery officers.

E. Parish and Clergy Screening

In addition to running background checks on everyone who is ordained or who applies for transfer into the Diocese of the West, we now renew background checks on existing clergy every three years. It is advised that parishes should also renew background checks periodically on youth workers.

His Grace expects 100% compliance in every parish with the policies and procedures for the prevention of child abuse. All parishes must read and adopt these policies and certify annually that they have done so.

During Lent, His Grace sent out a compliance questionnaire to all clergy with a deadline for returning the form by May 1st. Most clergy have sent in these forms, but some have not. His Grace announced that any parish priest who has not returned this very simple form by May 1st will be suspended without pay until this acknowledgement is received by our diocesan staff.

F. Seminary Visits

Fr. Matthew Tate reported that the Diocese of the West has many seminarians in school right now and that they greatly appreciate our annual visits and modest financial support.

At St. Tikhon's Seminary, we have six seminarians who either come from our diocese and are hoping to return here, or who are interested in relocating to the Diocese of the West after they graduate: Jeff Morrison, Alexis Baldwin, Priest Andres Blom, Deacon Benjamin Huggins, Phillip Halliwell, and Moses McPherson.

At St. Vladimir's we have three seminarians interested in the Diocese of the West: James Weigel, Deacon Timothy Yates, and Deacon Andre Paez. Andre is from the Central Pacific Deanery and would welcome the chance to return to the area.

We have possible assignments for a number of these men, but we are attracting more clergy than we have places to put them. We need to expand our missionary outreach.

G. OCA Strategic Plan

Fr. David Lowell reported on the progress of the OCA strategic planning process. Many of the projects underway are small tasks that may be useful, but are far from fascinating or transformative. Youth activities have some interest and momentum. Fr. John Reeves' presentation on missionary outreach training at the last Metropolitan Council meeting was excellent and we should look for opportunities to welcome his presentation into our deaneries. Fr. Reeves emphasized that missionary growth is the work of deaneries, not single parishes alone. His training retreats are aimed at involving entire deaneries.

Fr. Lowell gave a presentation at the Metropolitan Council focused on deanery ownership of the strategic planning goals, and he will join the Deans of this diocese at their next Dean's retreat in July.

H. 2012 Diocesan Assembly in Denver

The Annual Diocesan Assembly will take place in Denver, Colorado beginning Tuesday evening, October 2nd and concluding Thursday afternoon, October 4th. The Diocesan Council will meet the evening of October 2nd. During the Assembly, we have the opportunity to break out by deaneries – lay and clergy together – to look at goals and plans within each deanery for the coming year. Further details will be forthcoming.

VI. New Business

A. The 25th Anniversary of Bishop Tikhon's consecration is May 30, 2012. ***The Diocesan Council expresses its gratitude to His Grace Bishop Tikhon for his many years of dedicated and humble service to the Diocese of the West and we ask his continued prayers and blessing.***

B. The consecration of Father Alexander Golitzin to the Episcopacy will take place in May as previously noted. Since Fr. Golitzin is a son of this diocese, it is the wish of His Grace Bishop Benjamin and the Diocesan Council that we give him a special Politza on the occasion of his consecration.

It was moved and seconded (Anderson, Margitich) to approve up to \$700 for the purchase of a Politza as a gift for Bishop-elect Alexander Golitzin. The motion carried unanimously.

C. Martha and Mary House

In the coming three months we will be examining the documents of Martha and Mary House and the future of the relationship between the Diocese and this organization.

D. Upcoming Meetings

The Diocesan Deans will meet July 9th and 10th. The Chancellor's Advisory Committee will meet in San Francisco on Wednesday, July 11th.

The next Diocesan Council meeting will be Thursday July 12th beginning at 10:30am at Holy Trinity Cathedral in San Francisco.

VII. The meeting was adjourned at 1:55pm.