

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL REPORT TO THE 46th DIOCESAN
ASSEMBLY
OF THE DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA & EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
+ ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA +

December 4-5, 2009

Very Reverend John A. Onofrey / Diocesan Clergy Representative
Reader Peter Bohlender / Diocesan Lay Representative

The Metropolitan Council has assembled together two times since the 45th Diocesan Assembly [November 22, 2008]. The Council Meetings were held February 18- 20, 2009 and September 22-25, 2009 [Joint Holy Synod & Metropolitan Council].

In the past year since the 45th Assembly, a great amount of work has been completed by the Metropolitan Council in conjunction with the Holy Synod and the “*new*” Central Administration. This work, though at many times not completely apparent, understood, or accepted has brought great change to the life of the Church [OCA] and its Faithful members. Much has been discussed, spoken and written over the past year, and unfortunately, the current situation of the Orthodox Church in America continues to leave its Parishes and Faithful with many questions, concerns and apprehension.

As previously stated, a great amount of work has been accomplished by the OCA, the Holy Synod, the Central Administration and Metropolitan Council. The record of these accomplishments have been reported through various forms of media, the OCA website [www.OCA.org], *The Orthodox Church*, encyclicals, etc. It will therefore be the intention of this report to give an overview of the Metropolitan Council and its accomplishments.

NOTE: Department Reports, Council MINUTES, etc. will be available for review from Fr. John Onofrey and/or Reader Peter Bohlender.

Central Administrative Re -Organization:

With the election of our new Primate, His Beatitude, Metropolitan JONAH, at the All-American Council last November and after more than three year’ s of hard work by the Organization Task Force, the old and unregulated administration (in which the Chancellor’ s Office had supreme control), has been replaced with a new explicit and accountable system of mutual group responsibility among the directors of four administrative offices:

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Chancellor: Very Rev. Alexander Garklavs

Secretary: Very Rev. Eric Tossi

Outgoing Treasurer: Very Rev. Michael Tassos (Service completed 9/24/09)

New Treasurer: Melanie Ringa (Confirmed by M.C. 9/24/09)

Director of Ministries: Very Rev. Andrew Jarmus

Although the Holy Synod, Central Administration (CA) and MC continue to modify, adjust and “*tweak*” the operation(s) of the OCA, the structure of the permanent staffing at Syosset has been reworked for greater productivity, less redundancy, and financial efficiency. On a very personal note, it should be understood that the Chancery Staff, which previously had between 25 and 30 Full and Part Time positions, now operates with a very limited staff of approximately 10 Full and Part Time positions. These dedicated individuals should be recognized for their excellent and often overlooked and unappreciated work.

The Future of the OCA / Strategic Planning:

Under the direction and blessing of Metropolitan JONAH, the Holy Synod (HS), CA, and MC have been preparing for the future of the Church (OCA), its Vision and its Mission. The Strategic Planning will include all areas within the life of the Church, Evangelization, Orthodox Unity, Priesthood, Education/Seminaries, Monasticism, Spirituality and Worship. This will be a great task and ongoing endeavor by the OCA, however as the members of the HS and MC stated, the most important task of the Church/OCA is the proclamation of the Gospel.

Financial Status :

The OCA , like many churches, struggles to maintain its financial integrity in a time of aging and declining membership, inflation and rising costs, and of course a very bleak and uncertain economic future. As reported through the OCA website, the Church was able, through Budget revisions and careful financial management, realize a \$170,000 surplus for 2009 [note: \$90,000 to OCA Loan payment / \$80,000 Cash surplus]. It should also be noted that this surplus could be used for mounting Legal costs. The MC passed a 2010 Budget that is projected to yield a slight

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surplus. However, it must be noted that future Legal expenses will most certainly affect the financial status of the Church. As previously stated, Fr. Michael Tassos, who did an excellent job, realigning and controlling the Finances of the OCA, has given up his position as Treasurer. He has been replaced by Ms. Melanie Ringa, who is qualified to operate the new BlackBaud Financial Program, and has served as the Associate Chancellor for Finance at St. Vladimir' s Seminary.

Legal Issues:

A major concern and continuing struggle for the OCA, HS, CA and MC has been the ongoing Legal Issues and Lawsuits. In various “ *Executive Sessions*” , the MC, its Legal Committee and Legal Counsel discussed and updated pending legal actions. These Legal situations are extremely sensitive and have consumed much time and energy from the OCA. As previously stated, these Legal concerns have affected and continue to directly affect the life, spirituality and financial status of the Church.

Other OCA /MC Business:

Despite the impact Legal Issues have played in the life of the Church over the past few years, the HS, MC and CA have struggled to improve the OCA and its Mission in America. As previously stated, many plans are being developed through the ongoing Strategic Planning initiated by Met. JONAH and the Holy Synod. Included within this future planning are the OCA Statutes, Financial Support Programs/Tithing, Crisis Management, Sexual Misconduct Policies, Insurance and Pension Programs, Church Archives Protection, and the upcoming 16th All -American Council [West: Seattle?/Denver?]

As previously stated:

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Respectfully submitted,
Fr. John A. Onofrey
Reader Peter Bohlender