

**DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
46TH ANNUAL DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY
FRIDAY – SATURDAY, DEC. 4-5, 2009
ST. NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH
BETHLEHEM, PA**

The Assembly began at 5:11 PM with the singing of “O Heavenly King”. His Grace, Bishop TIKHON, declared the 46th Diocesan Assembly open.

AGENDA

Fr. John Kowalczyk, Diocesan Chancellor, presented the Agenda for the Diocesan Assembly. A motion was made and seconded to approve the Agenda, and it was approved. While the Credentials Report was being finalized, Election of Assembly Officers proceeded.

ELECTION OF DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY OFFICERS

Clergy Chair: Fr. Timothy Hojnicky, nominated by Fr. Michael Hatrak, nomination seconded by Ms. Elsie Herman. Father John Perich moved to close nominations; Fr. Claude Vinyard seconded the motion; and Fr. Hojnicky was elected by unanimous voice vote.

Lay Chair: Mr. John Malinchok, nominated by Fr. Dennis Swencki, seconded by Fr. David Cowan. Father James Jadick moved to close; Fr. John Perich seconded; and Mr. Malinchok was elected by unanimous voice vote.

Clergy Secretary: Fr. David Cowan, nominated by Fr. Timothy Hojnicky; seconded by Fr. Michael Evans. Father Claude Vinyard moved to close; Fr. David Mahaffey seconded; and Fr. Cowan was elected by unanimous voice vote.

Lay Secretary: Miss Kimberly Metz, nominated by Ms. Dorothy Streltzyk, seconded by Fr. John Perich. Fr. David Mahaffey moved to close; Fr. Stephen Vernak seconded; and Miss Metz was elected by unanimous voice vote.

CREDENTIALS

Fr. John Onofrey presented the Credentials report for Friday evening:

Hierarch	1
Clergy Delegates	24
Lay Delegates	16
Diocesan Council	3
Total Voting Attendance:	43
Observers/Guests	13

Attendees were reminded that Observers and Guests have the right to speak, but are unable to vote.

The **MINUTES OF THE 45th ANNUAL DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY** were presented for approval. Fr. Hojnicky asked for comments on the Minutes of the 45th Diocesan Assembly, held Nov. 21-22, 2009, also at St. Nicholas Church in Bethlehem, PA. Father Daniel Mathewson moved the minutes be approved. Fr. David Shewczyk seconded; and the minutes were approved.

NOMINATIONS for METROPOLITAN COUNCIL & DIOCESAN COUNCIL

Fr. Hojnicky announced that nominations for Metropolitan Council and Diocesan Council

would take place on Friday evening, and elections would take place Saturday morning. Bishop Tikhon appointed two tellers, Fr. Michael Demko and Mr. Bill Simpson to record nominations. His Grace said that the floor would be opened up for voting on Saturday.

Bishop Tikhon shared that in the past, Deanery Representatives to the Diocesan Council were elected from the body of the assembly, but His Grace felt it made more sense for each deanery to elect its own representative. A suggestion was made that the Assistant Dean should be the Clergy Representative on the Diocesan Council. Bishop Tikhon said that on Saturday, the deaneries would break into caucuses to elect someone from within each deanery. The assembly would also vote on Saturday for Metropolitan Council Clergy & Lay Representatives, Diocesan Council Clergy & Lay At-Large Representatives, and three Diocesan Auditors. Fr. Hojnicky then asked for nominations from the floor.

Fr. John Perich asked whether there was any previous documentation, such as By-Laws, of how the electoral process should proceed so that we can establish a consistent process to follow in the future. Bishop Tikhon agreed that a consistent process does need to be established.

His Grace said that we have no Diocesan by-laws. We need to have something in the Diocese to supplement – not replace – the OCA Statute in areas lacking clarity. Bishop Tikhon is preparing proposed Diocesan by-laws which he will present to the members of the Diocesan Council for their review. It may take longer than one year to refine and adopt them, but that is the intent.

Fr. Onofrey interjected to offer an amendment to Friday evening's head count:

Hierarchy:	1
Clergy:	24
Delegates:	16
Diocesan Council:	3
Total Voting Attendance:	43 (no change from previous count)
Observers:	7

Nominations for Clergy Representative, Metropolitan Council:

Fr. Hojnicky stated that since Fr. John Onofrey has ended his term on the Metropolitan Council, the Assembly must elect a new Clergy Representative. Fr. Adam Sexton nominated Fr. Nicholas Solak for Clergy Representative. Ms. Maria Proch seconded. Fr. Solak declined.

Fr. Matthew Cantrell nominated Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk. Fr. Andrew Anderson seconded. Fr. Gorodenchuk accepted, noting that he feels a priest with more experience would be a better choice.

Fr. Gorodenchuk nominated Fr. Mahaffey. Fr. Anderson seconded. Fr. Mahaffey stated that he did not decline the nomination; however, he is concerned that he does not have the time to fulfill the demands of the office.

Fr. James Weremedic was nominated by Ms. Maria Proch. Fr. Mahaffey seconded. Fr. Weremedic accepted the nomination.

Mr. Simpson suggested that someone research the minutes from past years to decide a basis for the election process – a “past practice” policy.

No further nominations were made from the floor, but Fr. Hojnicky encouraged attendees to submit any additional nominees’ names to Fr. Demko and Mr. Simpson before Saturday’s session.

Nominations for Lay Representative, Metropolitan Council:

Fr. Mahaffey asked whether Mr. Peter Bohlender can be nominated, since he is eligible for one more term. Bishop Tikhon said that he could be nominated.

Miss Kimberly Metz was nominated by Fr. David Mahaffey. Fr. John Perich seconded. Miss Metz accepted.

Ms. Mary Sernak was nominated; she declined the nomination.

Mr. David Yeosock was nominated by Fr. David Mahaffey, seconded by Ms. Melania Polli. Mr. Yeosock accepted the nomination.

Ms. Elsie Herman was nominated by Fr. Michael Demko, seconded by Fr. Adam Sexton. Ms. Herman accepted the nomination.

Nominations for Clergy & Lay At-Large Representatives, Diocesan Council:

For Clergy Representative, Fr. Nicholas Solak was nominated by Fr. David Mahaffey. Ms. Marie Proch seconded. Fr. Solak accepted.

Ms. Marie Proch was nominated by Maria Proch. Fr. David Mahaffey seconded. Ms. Proch accepted.

For Lay Representative, Mr. Mark Linnehan was nominated by Fr. Stephen Vernak. Mr. Joshua Florio seconded. Mr. Linnehan accepted.

Nominations for Auditor Positions:

Fr. Dennis Swencki was nominated by Mr. John Malinchok. Fr. Stephen Vernak seconded. Fr. Swencki declined so as to prevent any appearance of a conflict of interest with respect to his other financial roles in the Church.

Protodeacon Sergei Kapral was nominated by Fr. Joseph Martin. Fr. Sexton seconded. Protodeacon Kapral accepted.

Ms. Melania Polli was nominated by Ms. Maria Proch. Ms. Polli declined.

Mr. David Yeosock was nominated by Fr. David Mahaffey. Ms. Marie Proch seconded. Mr. Yeosock accepted.

Matushka Jennifer Cantrell was nominated by Fr. David Mahaffey. She was not present at the Assembly, but her husband, Fr. Matthew Cantrell, confirmed that she was willing to

accept the nomination. Father John Perich commented that it is Bishop Tikhon's prerogative to rule on whether Mat. Cantrell could be elected in absentia; His Grace took the question under advisement.

Fr. Hojnicky reviewed all nominees and the discussion closed with the singing of "Our Father" and a blessing of the food for dinner.

The Assembly convened again at 7:10 pm. Mr. Douglas Yates substituted as Lay Secretary for Kimberly Metz, who had a prior commitment, during the remainder of the evening session.

DISCUSSION OF REPORTS – DIOCESAN HIERARCH AND CHANCELLOR

The Diocesan Hierarch's Report, already circulated to Assembly members, was submitted for approval. In addition, Bishop Tikhon read aloud an Action Statement he has developed for the Diocese.

Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk asked His Grace how he sees the Diocese implementing and monitoring progress towards realizing these actions, so that these actions happen and are not simply a report that is read from time to time. Bishop Tikhon replied that Deaneries should be, and in some cases are, working more actively together to improve parish life. For example, the Wilkes-Barre Deanery is having an Administrative Conference in April to bring together clergy and council leaders from deanery parishes.

Fr. John Perich moved to support the Action Statement; to promise as parishes to try to uphold all these actions; and to increase parish membership by 10 percent in the next year. The motion was seconded, but after discussion, Fr. Perich withdrew the motion.

Bishop Tikhon commented that we need to change our thinking from "our parish is dying" to a mindset that sees life, and the potential of life, in the parish, as long as it still exists.

Rdr. John Black, Holy Trinity Church, Pottstown, expressed the concern that, given the anxiety within parishes over the decrease in funding due largely to deaths, the concept of ministry outside the parish gets lost. We need to maintain that focus on outreach. "We don't want to be America's best kept secret anymore."

Mr. Mark Linnehan commented that things are not dying everywhere, an example being his home parish of Holy Apostles Mission, Mechanicsburg. The Action Statement should simply have some measurable way of monitoring our success in meeting these directives, so we can take Bp. Tikhon's statement to the parishes and be able to say, "how are we doing on this?"

Bp. Tikhon responded that his intention, especially in the section entitled "Death in the Parish", was to show that we do have life, by shocking us. We've done a lot in the diocese to reflect life.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Bishop's Report. The Report was accepted.

The Diocesan Chancellor's Report, already circulated among Assembly participants, was highlighted by Fr. John Kowalczyk, Diocesan Chancellor. Fr. Kowalczyk thanked Bishop Tikhon for his continued archpastoral leadership over the past year. He placed emphasis on His Grace's active schedule of not only hierarchical visits to parishes, but his various meetings with clergy and lay groups, his responsibilities within the Holy Synod of the OCA, his role as Rector of St. Tikhon's Seminary, and his duties as overseer of the investigations of the finances of St. Tikhon's Monastery and Bookstore (though his role of Deputy Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery ended in late 2009 with the election of the resident Abbot).

Fr. Kowalczyk welcomed new diocesan priests Fr. James Jadick (Holy Ascension Church, Frackville), Fr. Andrew Bartek (Holy Trinity Church, Catasaqua), and Fr. Jason Franchak (Holy Trinity Church, Pottstown).

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Chancellor's Report; and the Report was accepted.

INVITED GUEST PRESENTATION:

Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff on Parish Revitalization

Fr. Kowalczyk then introduced Archpriest Jonathan Ivanoff, who gave a presentation entitled, "Do You Want to be Made Well: How to Release the God-Given Potential that Exists in Every Parish." The presentation focused on such essential questions as:

- What direction is the parish headed; and who determines that direction?
- What am I doing that PREVENTS my church from growing? (rather than, "What can I do to make my church grow?")

...and such themes as:

- identifying when the parish life cycle has reached a "plateau", or dangerous "auto-pilot" status, or worse, when the parish has begun a "decline" – usually the result of factions and power struggles among individuals or groups of the faithful
- evangelizing un-churched parishioners – those Orthodox who do not know the Gospel but only know the external customs and formal "membership" criteria of the parish
- asserting that there is no "Model Church" approach, and rather than copying the "programs" used at other parishes, looking instead at the common traits of healthy churches worldwide
- measuring the qualitative aspects of parish health, which can be observed in 8 different areas: leadership; spiritual gift-based ministry; spirituality; structures; worship; fellowship groups; evangelism; and relationships.

Father Ivanoff is a credentialed advisor in church development. Father Dan Kovalak is working with him to implement these church-development principles in this diocese. Parishes may contact Fr. Ivanoff or Fr. Kovalak and request their assistance in diagnosing and addressing their particular parish health concerns. The presentation was received enthusiastically.

ADJOURNMENT OF FRIDAY SESSION

The evening session adjourned at 8:45 p.m., with the singing of “It Is Truly Meet.”

OPENING OF SATURDAY SESSION, DEC. 5, 2009

The Saturday portion of the 46th Annual Diocesan Assembly began with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy by Bp. Tikhon and several of the attending clergy. The Assembly’s session opened at 10:30 a.m., with the singing of “O Heavenly King”.

ELECTION OF METROPOLITAN COUNCIL AND DIOCESAN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Voting Sequence. Mr. Malinchok offered clarification on the previous evening’s decisions in order to clear up confusion about the voting process for Metropolitan Council and Diocesan Council representatives. Fr. Perich suggested that the assembly vote for Metropolitan Council representatives first, then for Diocesan Council representatives.

Restatement of Metropolitan Council Clergy Representative Nominees. Mr. Malinchok announced that the three clergy members who had been nominated for Metropolitan Council Clergy Representative on Friday evening were Fr. Mahaffey, Fr. Gorodenchuk, and Fr. Weremedic.

Lay Representative Nominees. Miss Kimberly Metz declined her nomination from the previous night, and a lay representative nomination was needed from the floor. Fr. David Mahaffey nominated David Yeosock. Melania Polli seconded, and Mr. Yeosock accepted.

Fr. Michael Demko announced that Ms. Elsie Herman’s name had been given to him as a nomination. Ms. Linda Hutton seconded the nomination, and Ms. Herman accepted.

Fr. John Onofrey, outgoing Clergy Representative to the Metropolitan Council, explained the time commitment and the amount of travel involved with being a member of the Metropolitan Council. Fr. Dennis Swencki noted that the Council meetings would not necessarily take place only in Syosset, but would begin to meet in other areas of the country as well. Bishop Tikhon reminded the Assembly of the importance of Diocesan representation on the Metropolitan Council.

Fr. Michael Hatrak moved to close the nominations for Metropolitan Council. Fr. Weremedic seconded, and the motion passed.

Fr. Onofrey interjected to offer the morning’s Credentials Report before voting began:

Hierarchy:	1
Clergy:	27
Delegates:	29
Diocesan Council:	4
Total Voting Attendance:	60
Observers:	18

Fr. Demko and Mr. Simpson handed our ballots for voting for the Metropolitan Council Clergy and Lay Representatives. Clergy Representative nominees were announced, again, as

Fr. Mahaffey, Fr. Gorodenchuk, and Fr. Weremedic. Lay Representative nominees were announced, again, as Ms. Elsie Herman and Mr. David Yeosock.

Voting Results were later tallied and announced as:
Clergy Representative: Fr. David Mahaffey
Lay Representative: Mr. David Yeosock

DISCUSSION OF REPORTS

Treasurer's Report. Fr. Martin Browne, Diocesan Treasurer, offered highlights from his Report, already distributed via the Diocesan website.

Fr. Browne said that higher costs were incurred with the reoccupation of the Diocesan Center this year. An assessment of the building's condition from last December and January indicated the necessity for painting and touchups to the building, which were completed by the handyman of St. Tikhon's Monastery at a reasonable rate. A mold hazard was determined. New carpeting was installed at a cost of \$9,000, of which \$2,000 was donated. When His Grace took up residence there, he said he wanted it to be used not just as his home but truly as a center for the Diocese. The Center is indeed used regularly and in numerous ways: Diocesan administrators have their offices there; clergy and lay groups meet there regularly; and various visitors are hosted there.

The Diocese added an Administrative Assistant, Matushka Sandra Kopestonsky, to the payroll in January 2009. She has been an invaluable assistant to the Diocese and has worked to put the administrative processes of the Diocesan Center on a solid foundation that will make for smoother operations in the years to come. Also, Cindy Davis was hired as the Director of Communications, handling the web site and publications such as *Living Waters* and *Alive in Christ*. The 2009 *Alive in Christ* was published for \$5,000 – half of the usual cost – thanks largely to a printer referred by Fr. Dan Kovalak.

The Diocese ran at a loss this year because of unique expenses, among them the expenses associated with a car that was purchased for Bishop Tikhon – a Subaru that is a much better investment (and is more gasoline-efficient) than the previous car whose lease was up. The new car is owned by the Diocese (we are making monthly payments), not leased.

Concerning parish assessments, the Diocesan Council decided that a report of accounts payable will be presented. Several parishes are in significant arrears. Fr. Browne discussed the cash flow issue that occurs for the Diocese when parishes pay their dues on differing schedules. He said that the money flow is everyone's problem, not as a financial issue but an issue of spiritual health. If we focus on the spiritual health of the Diocese, the finances will heal themselves. If we focus only on the financial problem, both the spiritual and the financial health of the Diocese will decline into oblivion.

Fr. Browne offered Bishop Tikhon, and the auditing committee, his thanks for their help and constructive criticism throughout the year.

He offered three proposals at the end of his report:

- 1) the establishment of a Financial Affairs Committee with members selected from among the various qualified professionals and various constituencies within the Diocese (he noted that a similar proposal has been submitted by the Philadelphia Deanery; either proposal is acceptable to him);
- 2) the establishment of a Diocesan e-mail list for sending invoices to cut down on the cost of mail and increase transparency; and
- 3) the requirement for each parish to have an annual budget, and to submit that budget, along with a statement of financial position, to the Diocese – again, to increase transparency and accountability.

External Auditor’s Statement / Financial Compilation. Mr. Paul Berdy, an external auditor and advisor to the Diocesan Council, offered a review of the Financial Statement and Compilation Report.

He stated that the Diocese put down \$6,000 and borrowed \$19,000 to purchase Bishop Tikhon’s Subaru. He also mentioned that unrestricted funds were down by \$30,000. Restricted health insurance is handled by Matushka Kathy Kowalczyk and the money is Diocesan.

Mr. Berdy pointed out that the Diocese has Certificates of Deposit that were used as a cash reserve this year.

Cash collected from the United Appeal was down by \$16,000 this year. Revenue is down by \$35,000, but the Diocese paid \$13,000 more to the National Church than we did last year.

The Bishop’s salary was increased from last year. Mr. Berdy stated that we are now paying Bishop Tikhon’s payroll taxes only once per year.

Mat. Kopestonsky’s and Cindy Davis’ salaries are also included in the expense report.

There was a \$14,000 increase in maintenance and repairs. There was also money put out for research services to determine who owns certain plots of land within the Diocese.

In all, revenue is down and expenses are up.

Diocesan Auditors’ Report. Mr. David Yeosock, one of the three Diocesan Auditors, read the Audit Committee Report and shared that our financial records are in good condition: there is transparency, the receipts were well-maintained, and the bookkeeping is good.

Mr. Mark Linnehan requested clarification on a sentence in the third paragraph of the letter from the CPAs, asking about “management electing to submit disclosures”. Mr. Berdy said that the sentence referred to the footnotes in financial statements that describe the organization and how revenue and expenses are categorized internally by an organization.

Fr. John Onofrey moved to accept the Financial Compilation, and Ms. Elsie Herman seconded the motion. The motion carried.

DIOCESAN COUNCIL AND DEANERIES

Election of Clergy and Lay Representatives to the Diocesan Council. The assembly addressed the voting for members of the Diocesan Council. Nominees were:

Diocesan Council Clergy Representative: Fr. Nicholas Solak

Diocesan Council Lay Representative: Ms. Marie Proch, Mr. Mark Linnehan, and Ms. Elsie Herman

Fr. Swencki moved for a unanimous vote for Fr. Solak, which was seconded by Fr. David Shewczyk. The motion passed. Voting took place by ballot for the Lay Representatives and it was later announced that Mr. Linnehan had won.

Mr. Malinchok announced that the Diocesan Council Secretary's Report and the Deanery Reports are available on the Diocesan website. Each Dean was asked to stand and announce his Deanery's officers.

Philadelphia Deanery, announced by Fr. David Mahaffey

Dean: Fr. David Mahaffey

Assistant Dean: Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk

Secretary: Fr. Andrew Anderson

Treasurer: Fr. Theodore Heckman

Frackville Deanery, announced by Fr. Michael Hatrak

Dean: Fr. Michael Hatrak

Assistant Dean: Fr. Timothy Hojnicky

Secretary: Fr. John Onofrey

Treasurer: Fr. Michael Evans

Wilkes-Barre Deanery, announced by Fr. David Shewczyk (the Dean, Fr. Daniel

Kovalak, was absent for a funeral)

Dean: Fr. Daniel Kovalak

Assistant Dean: Fr. David Shewczyk

Secretary: Fr. Nicholas Solak

Treasurer: Fr. David Cowan

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT

Fr. Onofrey announced that the proceedings from the past two meetings of the Metropolitan Council are available online at www.oca.org.

Fr. Solak asked a question about the legal issues going on with the National Church and wanted to know what Fr. Onofrey could share about the lawsuits in process. Fr. Onofrey responded that the lawsuits are still ongoing and costing a lot of money, but that according to the lawyers, the proceedings will likely be done by November 2010.

Fr. Perich asked how much money is being spent on the lawsuits. Fr. Swencki said that it was costing \$321,000 for this fiscal year and the cost will be higher in the next fiscal year. Fr. Swencki said that \$350,000 was budgeted for the coming year. Fr. Perich asked whether we will look for other ways to settle the lawsuits that would keep the church from paying such

high fees. Fr. Onofrey said that the Council decided that the way they are proceeding now is the best way to resolve the issues, because so many people have been hurt along the way that it would not be prudent to “cut deals” or settle.

Ms. Herman asked when the issues began and Fr. Onofrey answered that it all started two and a half years ago. She asked if there is a statute of limitations on the suits, and Fr. Onofrey said that there is no statute of limitations; however, if it goes on long enough, there could be a case of forced arbitration, which the Council does not want. They want to go to trial. Forced arbitration would cost more than going to trial.

Further conversation ensued about how long we can continue financing the lawsuits and whether donations being received in response to Metropolitan Jonah’s request for money for ministries are being earmarked so that they do not get pulled to pay for legal fees. Fr. Onofrey agreed that there is a lot of fear about where the money is going. Fr. Swencki confirmed that Metropolitan Jonah is asking for a specific set of funding for that appeal, and all of the money in that appeal will go to the ministries. Mr. Linnehan asked how many cases are ongoing right now, and Fr. Onofrey stated that there are three lawsuits currently on the table, referred to commonly as “Kondratick v. OCA”; “Kondratick v. Jarmus and Skordinski”; and “the Koumentakos suit”.

Fr. Perich asked how much we have been able to pay down on the \$1.7 million that the National Church borrowed. Fr. Swencki said that we have paid down a “decent chunk” and money has not been re-borrowed. Fr. Perich asked whether the Metropolitan Council can use any funds necessary to continue the lawsuits – for example, endowments – and Fr. Swencki said no. The Metropolitan Council cannot just decide to take properties and sell them.

Moving on to a new topic, Fr. Solak commented that the Strategic Plan is moving very slowly and asked how the Diocese will be involved. Fr. Onofrey said that money for programs is sparse right now, so that is why the Council is still in the development stages for a Strategic Plan. Bishop Tikhon shared that he has the same question about the Strategic Plan and hopes that the Holy Synod’s meeting in February will provide some direction. In terms of how involved the Diocese will be, the Assembly can determine that by giving input to the Synod of how the Diocese sees the church going. That will help the Synod establish the definition of a Strategic plan.

Fr. Onofrey said that he would like to show his appreciation for the people, both full and part-time, who run the church and offer his thanks for the great job they are doing. He said it has been a great joy serving the Diocese on the Metropolitan Council. Bishop Tikhon offered his thanks to Fr. Onofrey and Peter Bohlender for their work as representatives to the Metropolitan Council on behalf of the Diocese.

Deanery Caucuses and Elections to the Diocesan Council. At this time, the Assembly broke for a 15-minute caucus of each deanery to meet and elect its representatives to the Diocesan Council. Election results are:

Frackville Deanery: Fr. Timothy Hojnicky and Elsie Herman

Wilkes-Barre Deanery: Fr. John Soucek and Mr. John Buckeye

Philadelphia Deanery: Fr. Matthew Cantrell and Mr. Douglas Yates

The Assembly then moved to elect auditors. Earlier nominees were Protodeacon Sergei Kapral, Mr. David Yeosock, and Matushka Jennifer Cantrell. Fr. Stephen Vernak moved to close the nominations and begin voting; this was seconded by Ms. Elsie Herman. The motion passed.

Discussion and Decisions on Treasurer's Proposals

Fr. Hatrak moved to establish a Financial Affairs Committee as proposed in Fr. Browne's report. The motion was seconded by Fr. Swencki and passed.

Fr. Gorodenchuk stated that a resolution from the Philadelphia Deanery is similar to Fr. Browne's proposal in regard to finances, and asked whether the Philadelphia committee will be able to look into alternative forms of stewardship. Fr. Browne was agreeable to this. Fr. Gorodenchuk said that the Philadelphia Deanery wants to use a new model based on proportional giving rather than census-based giving. Mr. Linnehan asked whether that is the right model to use, and Fr. Browne said that Philadelphia is proposing to change the way they are doing things because the current way is counterproductive. Fr. Browne said he believes the best way to approach this type of change in giving is to present it to the largest body in the Diocese for a vote, so that we all have a voice, and also so that the Diocese will take ownership of the change.

Fr. Browne offered some clarification on the purpose of the newly established Financial Affairs Committee. He said it will include professional laypeople and will take a systematic and comprehensive look at how we go about stewardship. What suits other dioceses around the nation may not suit ours. Diocese-wide involvement is important.

Fr. Swencki suggested that, with the passage of the proposal for a Financial Affairs Committee, we ask Fr. Gorodenchuk to reshape his (the Philadelphia Deanery's) resolution.

Fr. Vladimir Fetcho suggested that the purpose of the committee and the resolution seem to mesh together; however, one is about stewardship and the other is about transparency. He said that what is missing is a strategic plan and asked for a committed direction from Bishop Tikhon. Mr. William Podlusky said that three years ago a lot of parishes tried the "stewardship model" without any Diocesan plan and forged their own rules, which resulted in the creation of poor giving habits.

Fr. Gorodenchuk said that the Philadelphia Deanery requests the formation of a committee to review the manner of giving. Fr. Mahaffey made a motion for the establishment of such a committee; the motion was seconded by Fr. Shewczyk. The motion carried.

Bishop Tikhon said that with guidance from a committee, each parish can open up a dialogue to find solutions that will help improve giving. He said that the committee would need to know more details of the status of each parish's financial life before beginning to move forward.

Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff asked for and was given permission to comment. He offered his support of the committee and said that a great indicator of a parish's health is their level of giving.

Protodeacon Peter Skoog asked what the outcome will be if the Diocese were to adopt the Philadelphia Deanery's recommendations. Fr. Gorodenchuk said that at next year's meeting he would like to present suggestions of stewardship scenarios that will be successful.

Fr. Cowan wondered whether the committee would be able to give interim reports to the Diocesan Council and each of the other Deaneries. He said that we need to see progress. Quarterly or semi-annual reports would be helpful. Those who notice the severity of the money problem are reaching for all kinds of different solutions, and the solutions are inconsistent from parish to parish. Bishop Tikhon said that the committee should present reports at each Diocesan Council meeting, and that it is important to have an ongoing discussion about stewardship starting now.

The motion carried for the establishment of a stewardship committee in the Philadelphia Deanery. The newly established Diocesan Financial Affairs Committee will encompass the content of the Philadelphia Deanery stewardship committee in its work.

MISSIONS AND OUTREACH

Holy Apostles Mission

Fr. Hojnicky offered highlights of the past year at Holy Apostles Mission in Mechanicsburg, including the celebration of their 5th Anniversary and the purchase of 4,200 square feet of office space for \$215,000. Through the help of God, and the hard work of the parish, including dinner dances and fundraisers for the Building Fund, there is only \$57,000 left on the mortgage.

Beginning in January 2010, Holy Apostles Mission will take their Annual Budget, divide it by 12, and give ten percent monthly back to the Diocese.

Fr. Hojnicky affirmed that every parish must discover and use the talents available among its people, and this is practiced at Holy Apostles.

This is the first year that Holy Apostles will be without the "safety net" of an OCA Missions grant.

Agia Sophia: An Orthodox Coffeehouse

Fr. Vernak showed a four-minute video about a pan-Orthodox-operated coffee shop, "Agia Sophia", that has become established in Colorado Springs, CO. The Colorado shop has freely given its ideas, insights, and name for the purpose of creating an Agia Sophia coffeehouse in Harrisburg, PA, which Fr. Vernak and a group of clergy and laypeople in the Harrisburg area are working hard to make a reality.

Fr. Vernak said that the shop is missions-oriented and no parish will receive a kickback from the profits. Any profits will go to charity. Christ the Saviour Church, Harrisburg (where Fr. Vernak is Rector), is using the talents and skills of people from their parish to make Agia Sophia a reality. Their church is not in an area of good exposure, so Fr. Vernak sees it as a scriptural mandate to put the parish out in the community. They will sell mainstream books, not just Orthodox books. They are currently exploring a property in Harrisburg for which

they are being offered a rate of \$14 per square foot. A Starbucks was there previously, and the building is up-to-date and handicapped-accessible. Bishop Tikhon has blessed this venture.

Fr. Vernak mentioned that they are doing a once-only, “alpha and omega” appeal to get the coffeehouse started. They are also looking for material donations of industrial equipment and services.

The purpose of the coffeehouse is not to push anyone to convert to Orthodoxy, but to offer exposure to the community. Fr. Vernak hopes that all will come and visit.

Bishop Tikhon said this is something we should be doing in every area of our diocese, and thanked Fr. Vernak for his work to make Agia Sophia a reality.

EDUCATION

Office of Church School Programs and Curriculum

Bishop Tikhon wants to expand the department of education and introduce the Deaneries as active participants. Maria Proch is involved in the Office of Church School Programs and Curriculum, and they had a meeting in the summer. They plan to meet again in January and will be encouraging meetings within each Deanery. Bishop Tikhon said that “we all need to help each other teach our children”.

His Grace is also creating a department for spiritual development, for which he will appoint someone to oversee the OCF chapters at the colleges in our Diocese.

Office of Young Adult Activities

Bishop Tikhon shared that the Teen Activities Committee had requested permission to become an official department of the Diocese, and they were recently established as the Office of Young Adult Activities.

Ms. Tatiana Bohush and Mr. Nicholas Macura addressed the assembly to share that the Winter Retreat and Teen Camp programs continued to have an excellent turnout. We will be moving the Retreat to the Fatima Renewal Center in Dalton, PA, to accommodate more teenagers. We need parish support to send more children to our events so that we can expand further. Ms. Bohush noted that for the first time at this year’s Teen Camp program, all of our workshop speakers were local to the Diocese. She encouraged all clergy to sign up for speaking engagements at the camp program. New activities for 2010 will include a Spring Retreat in April 2010 in the Philadelphia Deanery. Mr. Macura added that the new website is located at www.ocayouth.org.

Mr. Malinchok suggested that parishes should consider reaching out to their youth through text messages – to bring the church to them through a media they are used to using.

PROPOSAL of BUDGET for 2010

Fr. Browne said that the census is final, so the budget revision includes updates to the final census figures. A few numbers were corrected as well. He asked everyone to take a look at the Aging Summary and explained how to read it. \$14,000 is outstanding and due to the

Diocese. A new permanent cost is the use of the Diocesan Center. There is a \$5 per head increase suggested in order to cover these costs so that the Diocese can pay its bills.

Fr. Browne then pointed out that on the budget proposal, the Diocesan goal is \$15,000 for the United Appeal. With 3,549 people in the Diocese, that would also come to about \$5 per head. In the previous United Appeal, the Diocese netted only \$6,161 from donations made by 191 individuals. Fr. Browne asked for parishes to raise at least their census times \$5 per member for the next United Appeal. He said that if the budget proposal is accepted, the Diocese will do the United Appeal in this manner through each parish, and not through a direct mail campaign. There was discussion about whether the United Appeal direct mail would end permanently, and Fr. Browne said that yes, a letter would be sent by the Bishop to confirm this.

Fr. Gorodenchuk suggested that it would be better for everybody to know exactly what the money raised by the United Appeal goes toward. Fr. Browne answered that in the past, separate appeals for each ministry had not worked very well, but maybe it would be good to specify where the money is going for the United Appeal. Fr. Swencki suggested that the budget be amended to include money earmarked for each ministry. Fr. Browne said that he needs freedom to designate the funds as they are needed. He does not have “the luxury of restricted funds”. He agrees that we should be using money from the United Appeal to fund the ministries. Discussion ensued about the flexibility of a general operating appeal.

Fr. John Perich moved to raise the individual assessment by \$10 and to abolish the United Appeal as a direct mail campaign. Fr. Swencki seconded the motion.

Fr. Daniel Mathewson suggested that if there is a need for more money for a ministry, the Diocese should send a letter for that specific purpose. Fr. Swencki asked whether Bishop Tikhon agreed with the motion. Bishop Tikhon stated that he understood the difficulty of the proposal and would be in favor of either one.

The motion to raise the Diocesan Assessment by \$10 per individual, rather than have a United Appeal, carried (30 in favor, 18 against, 12 abstentions).

Fr. Onofrey moved to approve the budget. Bill Podlusk seconded. The motion carried.

Fr. Onofrey made mention that Bishop Tikhon’s compensation is “really poor”. His Grace is being paid less than minimum wage. Other Bishops are paid much more. His expenses are not being covered by the National Church.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business was brought to the floor.

NEW BUSINESS/UPCOMING EVENTS

Fr. Shewczyk encouraged the Diocese to attend an upcoming “Christ in the Wilderness” event.

Mr. Linnehan asked that our representatives share with the Metropolitan Council that “the directions coming down from the top are not working for the church” in terms of our

parish's giving patterns. He is concerned that 75 percent of the Diocese's revenue is in turn paid to the National Church. He asked that our Metropolitan Council representatives bring this concern to the Metropolitan Council. Fr. Vernak agreed.

Fr. Vernak invited all to a Choir Workshop in Harrisburg on Friday, March 20.

Fr. Mathewson announced a January FOCA retreat for youths ages 10-17.

Fr. Sexton said that the Wilkes-Barre deanery would be taking a bus to the March for Life on January 22. There is only one bus, but there is no cost for those who wish to go.

Mr. Malinchok referred to Bishop Tikhon's Diocesan Call to Action statement and encouraged parishes to invite their communities to their Pascha Services this year, especially because Pascha and American Easter fall together. He suggested that every parish should get the word out.

Bishop Tikhon took a moment to clarify that Saint Tikhon's Monastery and Seminary, although they are located within the physical boundaries of the Diocese, are not a part of the Diocese and are under the leadership of Metropolitan Jonah. The monastery is self-governing and the Abbot takes direction from Metropolitan Jonah rather than the Diocesan Bishop. The newly elected Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery is Igumen Sergius (Bowyer).

Bishop Tikhon read a letter from Fr. Abbot Sergius offering his thanks to the Diocese for all of their support and inviting members of the Diocese to his installation as Abbot on January 23. There is also a new guest house available for anyone who would like to visit.

Bishop Tikhon thanked Fr. David Mahaffey and all the faithful of St. Nicholas Church, Bethlehem, for hosting the Assembly the past several years, and indicated that we will assemble again here next year. His Grace encouraged the Assembly to put into action all of our plans for this year. He asked for a motion to adjourn the Assembly. Fr. Joseph Martin moved to adjourn, and Protodeacon Kapral seconded the motion.

CLOSING PRAYER AND DEPARTURE

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM with the singing of "It Is Truly Meet."

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. David Cowan, Clergy Secretary
Miss Kimberly Metz, Lay Secretary