

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL REPORT TO 47TH DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY
THE DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA AND EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20TH, 2010
SAINT NICHOLAS ORTHODOX CHURCH, BETHLEHEM

V. Reverend David Mahaffey

Diocesan Clergy Representative

David M. Yeosock, PE

Diocesan Lay Representative

His Beatitude, Metropolitan JONAH and His Grace, Bishop TIKHON along with Diocesan Hierarchs from the OCA convened two meetings of The Metropolitan Council since the past Diocesan Assembly. The representatives from the Diocese were present on March 3rd thru 5th and on September 20th thru 23rd at the East Norwich Inn, Syosset, New York.

The Central Administration of the Church has made significant strides in dealing with the myriad of challenges facing the OCA. During the most recent council and as a welcome break from legal discussion in executive session, V. Rev. Thomas Hopko conducted a retreat that began with a strong ascetical and individual assessment and then posited questions to the members regarding a singular most important calling, duty and/ or task facing the Metropolitan, the Holy Synod and the Metropolitan Council Members. The purpose of the retreat was to invite council members to think introspectively and soberly about themselves, discuss their role in the Body, and reveal their ecclesial and personal viewpoints on specific questions. The following quote from Fr. Tom Hopko describes his impression of the bishops, priests, and laity working together:

"I was recently blessed with the opportunity to lead a retreat for the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America, and then to attend the Council's regularly scheduled meeting. It was an amazing experience. I can't believe how wonderful it all was: instructive, inspiring, challenging, encouraging, edifying and comforting. I don't believe that anything like it occurs in contemporary Orthodoxy anywhere on earth."

The open format discussion and liturgical prayer was subsequently followed with agenda items and reports covered on a continuing basis throughout the year: Charity, Education, Finance, Governance, Legal, Management, Pension, Policy, Resources, and etcetera. Of historical note, the ongoing inventory of lands in the Diocese of Alaska culminated in an authorization of quitclaim deeds by the OCA to all properties in the geographical boundaries of the State of Alaska. In essence, the presiding Hierarch and the Diocese of Alaska are now afforded the same control of lands similar to the interest held in all real property in our own Diocese, DOEPA (reference is made to the OCA press release commending the effort involved in realizing the approved motion).

The fiduciary responsibility of the Council was exercised in the review of 2010 Financial Statements, 2008/ 2009 Audits, Investment and Department Reports, and reviewing and approving the 2011 Budget. It is important to note that the OCA expects a surplus for the year ending December 31, 2010, and further proposes a budgeted surplus for the year 2011. The surplus is to be retained and be expanded to accommodate an emergency six month operating scenario. Deacon Martin Wyatt, CPA led an Audit Committee mandated by Statue at the 15th AAC and began a process of reviewing “stavropegial” institutions to the extent and discretion allowed by the independent communities. The goal of the audit committee was to establish a baseline assessment for future work, establish preliminary procedures, and conduct substantive testing on a limited basis. Lambrides conducted the audit of the year 2009 for the Orthodox Church in America and issued a draft report. The OCA has and will continue to post all pertinent financial information on the website for your purview.

The legal issues that have been the primary topic of the MC’s recent meetings appear to be requiring less resources and attention of the Central Administration in the near future. Actions of the legal council will be in a proactive manner rather than response mode. The aforementioned Alaska Lands issue, the reports and disbanding of the SIC and STIC committees, and the majority of internal Church disciplinary actions have come to settlement and action by the Holy Synod. Legal fees are expected to decrease substantially in the foreseeable future. Many of the discussions on the legal issues were conducted in executive session and terms of the settlement agreements prevent the Diocesan Council Members to the MC from commenting on these sensitive issues in specific detail (for more information reference is made to public statements published on the OCA Website).

The Pension Board Report detailed the fact that investments are realizing less favorable market returns and an independent advisor has been adjusting the forecasted return on the portfolio. It was noted during the meeting that a 7 to 7.75 percent interest rate are typically being anticipated for similar pension funds well below the performance realized in OCA Pension Plan in prior years. The funded status from actuary reports is 85 percent with 100 percent funded status projected for 2025.

The Chancellor of the OCA, Archpriest Alexander Glarkavs, noted the lean work staff at the Chancery and the many duties that are now performed with a staff of six full-time and four part-time employees. A detailed presentation of the 16th All American Council (AAC), “Household of Faith” October 29th - November 4th, 2011, highlighted the more pragmatic approach to event planning with a budget priority being a primary emphasis. This means that expensive hotel services like continental breakfasts (a cup of coffee and bagel) will be not be provided (the hotel is adjacent to one of the largest malls in the Seattle Area and over 50 restaurants at all price levels are within walking distance). A website is also planned to be launched October 31st, 2010 by Microsoft for the AAC. In response to the Chancellor’s Report, the MC also established a committee to assist the Chancery in coordinating the schedule of Metropolitan JONAH and establishing time for His Beatitude to interact and manage the Central Church affairs directly from Syosset. In addition, the Chancery is undergoing minor repair projects with intent to protect and maintain the structure.

One area of funding in the 2011 Budget includes a complete overhaul of the OCA website. The website is currently one of the top three English sites in Orthodoxy and is a major point of contact within and outside the Church. The new site will be significant to the DOEPA as parishes will directly benefit through an improved web portal and presence. The site will also better organize liturgical resources used by the parishes and establish a credible impression for inquirers to the faith.

Father David Mahaffey and David Yeosock are available to answer any specific questions about the actions of the Metropolitan Council and can make available further information upon request.

Respectfully Submitted

November 1, 2010