

# MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-THIRD DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY OF THE DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

The 33Rd Annual Assembly of the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania of the Orthodox Church in America was convened on Saturday, October 19, 1996 at St. Michael's Orthodox Church, Old Forge, Pennsylvania.

His Eminence, Archbishop HERMAN, Archbishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, concelebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and Molieben with clergy representing the three deaneries.

## *ASSEMBLY SESSION*

The Assembly was opened with prayer and the blessing of Archbishop HERMAN at 11:30 a.m. in St. Michael's Auditorium. Fr. John Kowalczyk presented the Agenda. Mr. Edward Hojnicky moved to accept the Agenda, seconded by Mr. David Brzuchalski. The Agenda was approved with no changes.

## *Credentials*

Fr. John Onofrey presented the report of the credentials committee:

Hierarch	1
Clergy	31
Laity	26
Diocesan Council	1
Alternates	2
Observers	2
Guest	1

Mr. Stanley Stoy, CPA was welcomed as a guest for the morning session.

## *Election of Assembly Officers*

Fr. Kowalczyk submitted the following clergy and laity for Assembly Officers:

Clergy Vice-Chairman -- Fr. Daniel Ressetar  
Lay Vice-Chairman -- Mr. Edward Hojnicky  
Clergy Secretary -- Fr. David Shewczyk  
Lay Secretary -- Marie Proch

Fr. Eugene Vansuch moved to close nominations, seconded by Kay Fedirko. Motion carried.

## *Minutes of the 1995 Assembly*

Mr. Christopher Rowe moved to accept the minutes of the 32nd Assembly as presented, seconded by Fr. Michael Hatrak. Motion Carried.



### *Diocesan Archbishop's Report*

Archbishop HERMAN welcomed all clergy and delegates to the Assembly and commented on the good attendance. He noted the present census of approximately 4,974 members in the Diocese. Another decrease in the census is probable for the coming year. He encouraged the delegates to see what they could do to bring back former parish members and bring in new members as well.

His Eminence noted pastoral changes: Fr. John Mason went into retirement. Fr. David Shewczyk was transferred from Holy Resurrection Church, Alden Station to Holy Trinity Church, Wilkes Barre. Fr. John Maxwell transferred to the Diocese of the South. Fr. Andrew Diehl was received into the Orthodox Church in America and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania and assigned to St. Michael the Archangel Church, Wilmington, Delaware. Fr. Pavel Soucek was received from the Diocese of the South and assigned to Holy Trinity Church, Catasauqua. Fr. Paul Jannakos is assigned to St. Nicholas church, Coatesville. Holy Resurrection Church, Alden Station has stated that the parish cannot support a full-time rector at this time. Fr. Vladimir Petorak is assigned to take care of the parish needs especially on Sundays and Feast Days. SS. Peter and Paul Church, Uniondale is being serviced by the Monastic and Deanery Clergy. St. Andrew Church, Dallas will be closing in the near future. The site for a possible mission in Milford, Pennsylvania is being sought. There are many Orthodox people living in the area and seeking pastoral care. Hopefully something may be established by the end of December, 1996. The Consecration of Holy Trinity Church, Stroudsburg took place in September. Attendance was very good for both the Services and the Banquet. St. Michael the Archangel Church, Wilmington will have the Altar Consecration on October 20, 1996. It is hoped that the parish will continue its growth. St. Mark's Church, Wrightstown is still being supported by the Diocese. The Diocese offered financial assistance to seven families within the Diocese whose housing was devastated by the January flood. Each family received \$1,000. Three seminarians of St. Tikhon's Seminary will receive Diocesan scholarships beginning in the Spring Semester.

The Parish Council Conference held in Bethlehem was a success. Gratitude was offered to Fr. Eugene Vansuch for his work in support of the Conference. His Eminence encouraged the pastors and Parish council members to participate in the many Diocesan functions. He noted the largest enrollment ever at the St. Tikhon's Children's Camp and the successful Women's Retreat. Other events included the Annual Lecture Series at St. Tikhon's Seminary and the various Deanery lectures. Good comments were received as a result of all of these events but, the number of participants was lacking in some. He offered his thanks to all who worked and supported these events.

The Diocesan publication, *ALIVE IN CHRIST*, continues to be a good publication. Many people look forward to the new issues. There are several non-Orthodox who subscribe to the magazine. Gratitude was offered to Fr. John Kowalczyk and to those who support the publication including those who offer Christmas and Paschal Greetings. The time has come to put together a Diocesan Calendar. The Deans will gather the calendar dates of events. Parishes should send the information to the Deans as soon as possible. Work is being done to put the Diocese on-line through the use of the computer. More will be reported on this subject later today.

Many visitors come to the icon repository. Many of these visitors are non-Orthodox. Parishes are encouraged to make arrangements to visit. Thanks were offered to Mr. John Guzey and Fr. John Perich for their support of the icon repository.



Other building projects were noted. The cupolas on the Monastery Church are leaking. Hopefully, they will be repaired by Memorial Day. The Mausoleum is being constructed and may be ready for use in three months. The Diocesan Bell Tower is still without a cupola. The project will run \$16,000 - \$17,000. Some money is available for the project.

His Eminence turned his attention to the upcoming Annual Parish Meetings. He said that a review of clergy compensation should automatically be placed on the agenda and appropriate action taken. Discussions should be held about the spiritual life of the parish and not solely about the material things. The Diocese is developing a form that will be completed by both the pastor and the Council president concerning parish life and growth. This will be a confidential report given to the Archbishop in a timely manner. The purpose of the report will be to determine what can be done to assist the pastor and the parish to encourage growth as we move toward the year 2000. He encouraged the scheduling of more Divine Services, working with the parish choirs and the development of educational classes for all ages. He expressed his willingness to visit parishes at a time that would be most convenient for the faithful to attend.

Speaking on the subject of the Orthodox Church in America, Archbishop Herman stated that the site for the All-American Council in 1998 was not yet chosen. He reminded the delegates to be sure that parishes are setting aside the funds now that would ensure participation in the Council.

The Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards (FOS) is greatly used to support the Church's work. Parishes are encouraged to place FOS on the agenda and in the parish budgets. The dwindling diocesan membership roles affect the whole church. Many Church Departments cannot meet because of the lack of funding. The bishop's stipend has been stopped beginning September 1st, again due to the lack of funds. Every Department has been re-examined to be sure there is no waste.

The Holy Synod is scheduled to meet in October for four days. Church growth and finances will be main issues. Our representation church in Russia, St. Catherine's located in Moscow, is in great need of repair. The church is being remodeled and a consecration date will be set. Other topics to be discussed will include the 200th Anniversary of St. Innocent to be celebrated in our Orthodox Church in America. Celebrations are scheduled for both Alaska and St. Tikhon's (August 25th & 26th). There will be a pilgrimage in July to venerate the relics of St. Innocent. More information on the pilgrimage will be available in the future. A formal committee for the year 2000 celebration will be formed. Also, there is a possibility of bringing the relics of St. Seraphim of Sarov here for the Memorial Day Pilgrimage. The Department of Religious Education (DRE) is hoping to hold a national conference at St. Tikhon's Seminary / Monastery in 1997. His Eminence also announced the installation of the new Archbishop for the Greek Archdiocese, Archbishop Spyridon.

After speaking about all of these events in the Church's life, Archbishop Herman called for the full support of the clergy and faithful as the Orthodox Church in America looks to our Diocese and our leadership. He said that it is good to hear others speaking favorably about our good efforts. He closed his report by thanking everyone for their support in the last year and asked for continued support in the year to come.

Fr. Ressetar thanked His Eminence for his report. He expressed his gratitude on behalf of the Diocese to His Eminence for his tireless effort in working for the growth of the Diocese and the National Church. Archbishop Herman then took the opportunity to address questions, concerns and comments concerning his report.



***Report of the Diocesan Council Secretary***

The report of Fr. Eugene Vansuch was included in the Assembly packet of reports.

***Report of the Diocesan Council Treasurer***

Fr. John Kowalczyk presented his report in a separate packet which contained the report of the Certified Public Accountant, the Diocesan United Appeal Report and the Auditor's Report.

***Report of the Diocesan Auditors***

Fr. Paul Borick read the auditors report.

Fr. Vladimir Fetcho moved to accept all reports as presented, seconded by Fr. Nicholas Wyslutsky. Motion carried.

***Proposed Budget for 1997***

The proposed budget for 1997 was included in the Assembly packet. The proposed budget totaled \$132,025.00. Fr. John Kowalczyk noted that the Budget included an increase of \$200.00 for Archbishop Herman's salary. He thanked the parishes for their timely dispersal of assessments. Fr. John Udics moved to accept the proposed budget, seconded by Fr. Leo Poore. During the discussion, Fr. Daniel Kovalak spoke about clarifying categories so that the Budget categories will correspond to the categories in the Treasurer's report. Mr. Spas Raikin of Holy Trinity Church, Stroudsburg, thanked the Diocese for the \$5,000 of financial assistance. He also thanked those who were present for the recent Consecration of the Church. Following the discussion, the Budget for 1997 was passed with one opposed.

***Break for Lunch 12:30 p.m.- Sessions resume at 1:30 p.m.***

***Diocesan Deanery Reports***

The reports of the Diocesan Deaneries were printed in the Assembly packet. Fr. Andrew Diehl moved to accept the reports as given, seconded by Mr. David Brzuchalski. Motion Carried.

***Diocesan Department Reports:***

All Diocesan Department reports were printed in the Assembly packet.

***Department of Religious Education***

The report was given in the packet

***Department of Youth***

The report was given in the Assembly packet.



***Department of Publications and Public Relations***

Fr. John Kowalczyk referred to his report printed in the Assembly packet.

Mr. David Brzuchalski moved to accept the Department reports seconded by Fr. Leo Poore. Motion carried.

***Metropolitan Council Report***

The report was listed in the packet. Fr. Nicholas Wyslutsky moved to accept the report seconded by Mr. George Nakonetschny. Motion Carried.

***Other Matters***

Fr. John Udics proposed a strong recommendation that parishes provide the priest with a computer to do his work in the same way that they provide for typewriters, copy machines etc. The computer will be used not only to prepare documents, but as a tool to link with other priests and parishes. The Philadelphia Deanery is currently working on a project to link St. Tikhon's Seminary to the World Wide Web and produce a Home Page for the Seminary. This project will enable the Seminary to be in contact with the whole Diocese and provide a witness to the world as to what is happening in the Diocese, the Seminary and our Church. The Philadelphia Deanery is also accepting used computers that will be prepared for use at the Seminary.

Fr. John Bohush also spoke about the use of computers in parish and church work. Computer programming can be written for continuing education for clergy, religious education for children and late vocations. Fr. Bohush stated that he has found possible sources for the productions of CD ROM programs toward this end. He is also working on providing a Server for the Seminary, Monastery and Diocesan Center. Contacts have been made with on-line service providers such as America Online and Compuserve. He said that some meetings can be held on-line by computer in order to save on expenses.

Fr. Bohush moved that he would assemble an Orthodox computer network that would link the Diocese, Seminary, Parishes and Diocesan Center. Fr. John Udics seconded the motion. After much discussion, it was decided that a motion was not necessary. Archbishop Herman stated that the Diocese will gratefully accept Fr. John's gift and efforts. The Diocesan Council will further discuss the project and make the best use of the computer system. The computer can be a good tool but, personal contact is still necessary to build up the Church. Fr. Bohush retracted his motion in deference to the Archbishop's acceptance of his gift and efforts.

Maria Proch asked if it was possible to eliminate the 3rd mailing of the United Appeal in order to cut costs. Fr. Kowalczyk answered that we should keep it for this year but, reflect on the mailing for next year. Fr. Eugene Vansuch stated that we should keep the 3rd mailing as only 20% of the membership responds.

In response to the declining Diocesan census, Nancy Pashchuk asked if it was possible that a study be done to determine a pattern as to why people leave parishes. Archbishop Herman responded that approximately 90% of the decrease is due to deaths within the parishes. Others transfer to parishes outside the Diocese when they move. A few are lost through mixed marriages.



Fr. Daniel Kovalak moved, "In an effort to provide more clarity in budget line items and allow better tracking of budgeted funds, and in response to previous recommendations, this Diocesan Assembly moves to require the Diocesan Council to present a proposed budget next, and all future, Diocesan Assemblies that includes three columns; namely "Previous Year Budget", "Current Year Actual", and "Proposed Budget". The motion was seconded by Daniel Drobish. Motion carried.

Fr. Udics recommended that proper procedures and protocol be used in transferring parishioners between parishes. He also asked if there is a central source of information and help for the process of changing Parish By-laws. Archbishop Herman responded that the Parish By-laws must be in line with the Statutes of the Orthodox Church in America. A By-laws committee should be formed. Their work is then shared with the Parish Council. The proposed By-laws should then be sent to the Bishop for his approval. The By-laws are then sent back to the Parish Council and then to the Parish for their review. The entire membership must be involved in the process. He also stated that the Parish Trustees have a very important duty in that they are to be sure that the Parish Priest and Parish Council work together.

Fr. Daniel Kovalak moved to adjourn the Assembly, seconded by Fr. Leo Poore. Motion carried.

Before adjourning, Archbishop Herman thanked all for participating in the Assembly. He encouraged discussion about the life of the Church on the Deanery level. He said that we must make sure that our strengthened commitment is shown in our Devotion. Parishes should concentrate on the Divine Services. He said that many parishes are making use of the Akathists to increase liturgical life. Preaching should continue throughout the year. He encouraged a strengthened working relationship with the choir and a commitment to increase church attendance. He said that we are a praying church. People should be encouraged to come to services and to increase daily devotions in the home.

Finally, thanks were offered to Fr. David Mahaffey, the Parish Council and the parishioners of St. Michael's Church, Old Forge for a job well done in hosting this Diocesan Assembly.

The Diocesan Assembly was closed with prayer and the blessing of Archbishop Herman at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Priest David Shewczyk

*Priest David Shewczyk*  
*Marie Proch*  
Marie Proch

*+ Archbishop Herman*

Approved by  
His Eminence, Archbishop HERMAN