

**Orthodox Church in America**  
**Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania**  
**150<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Council Meeting**  
**October 9, 2008**

His Grace, the Right Reverend TIKHON, Bishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, opened the 150<sup>th</sup> Session of the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, with prayer at 10:30 am.

In attendance at this meeting of the Diocesan Council were:

His Grace, the Right Reverend TIKHON, Bishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania  
Archpriest John Kowalczyk, Diocesan Chancellor  
Priest Martin Browne, Diocesan Treasurer  
Archpriest Vladimir Fetcho, Dean – Wilkes-Barre Deanery  
Archpriest Michael Hatrak, Dean – Frackville Deanery  
Archpriest John Udics, Dean – Philadelphia Deanery, Secretary of the Diocesan Council  
Frackville Deanery: Priest Timothy Hojnicky Elsie Herman  
Philadelphia Deanery: Doug Yates  
Wilkes-Barre Deanery: Priest Nicholas Solak Mary Sernak  
Delegates At Large: Archpriest Daniel Kovalak Marie Proch  
Metropolitan Council representatives: Archpriest John Onofrey, Peter Bohlender

**The Minutes of the 149<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Council Meeting** were distributed by e-mail, but copies were also passed out and read silently. Father Hatrak moved to accept the minutes, seconded by Elsie Herman. The motion passed.

**The Minutes of the Extraordinary Diocesan Assembly**, August 9, 2008 at Saint Stephen's Cathedral, Philadelphia, were distributed and read. Father Udics suggested that the minutes should contain the actual texts of the resolutions which were passed. Peter Bohlender made a motion to accept the minutes containing the resolutions, seconded by Marie Proch. The motion passed.

**The Report of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON**

His Grace began his report with comments on how the various recent events and changes have affected our Diocese.

At the recent joint meeting of the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Metropolitan Council, the Special Investigative Report was presented and accepted, Metropolitan Herman retired, Archbishop Dimitri was elected to be Locum Tenens of the Metropolitan See, and Archbishop Seraphim became his administrator. Various other proposals were passed. Bishop Tikhon was assigned to be in charge of Saint Tikhon's Monastery (of which he remains Deputy Abbot, with Archbishop Dimitri as Locum Tenens Abbot), Saint Tikhon's Seminary and Saint Tikhon's Bookstore.

Three of the former Treasurers of the Orthodox Church in America and have been given letters of reprimand and forbidden to serve in any financial capacity. Father Dimitry Oselinsky, as a result, resigned from the Diocesan Council. Bishop Tikhon thanks Father Dimitry for his help in the Diocese and on the Council, recognizing that his resignation is an honorable thing.

Metropolitan Herman had surgery on his spine and is recovering – first in Pittsburgh and now in South Canaan. He seems to be in much better health.

One month before his retirement, Metropolitan Herman said that he planned to move out of the diocesan center and into a house. An extension is being built on that house, so within one month, he will be completely moved out of the diocesan center.

Bishop Tikhon has attended a number of the 'Town Hall' Meetings, and feels that this was a good and useful process.

A Pastoral Letter has been sent out by the Holy Synod of Bishops, addressing the crisis, giving a summary of what happened, beginning an effort to find healing and reconciliation and to restore trust in the Holy Synod of Bishops and with each other. The process of healing for the Orthodox Church in America will take time and effort.

The Holy Synod of Bishops will meet next week about the up-coming All-American Council and the election of a new metropolitan. This will give the opportunity to reexamine the life of the Orthodox Church in America. This work will help to set the tone for the All-American Council.

Our Diocese is in a good place in spite of the turmoil. His Grace is pleased with how proactive in the process of working toward the All-American Council our Diocese has been. This shows that Eastern Pennsylvania is working hard. It should be noted that the only bodies which submitted resolutions for the upcoming council were the Dioceses of Eastern and Western Pennsylvania. This is positive and moving forward, and His Grace is grateful for that work and support of our Diocesan faithful.

This doesn't mean that everything is 'hunky-dory.' Our census is down by 200, which is disappointing, but that's the reality. The financial crisis is a crisis of stewardship. The cost of insurance, and the mobility of our faithful affects our situation.

The theme of this year is Mission. Even though our focus will be healing and reconciliation, we will move on with the concept of preaching to all nations.

Self-evaluation of the Church – local community / parish / diocese / world around us, is something that is being proposed. Self-review by the clergy and parish councils will be given in written self-evaluations, to see how we're doing and how we're working. Perhaps this will include formulating by-laws for the diocese.

Pastoral changes: Father John Russin left the diocese, so Matushka Jennifer Cantrell has been appointed to the Audit Committee. Father Adam Sexton has been assigned to Saint John the Baptist Church, Nanticoke. Father Michael Demko has been assigned to Holy Annunciation Church, Berwick. Saint Basil Church, Simpson is being serviced by Diocesan clergy.

The Missions Task Force has not met recently. The Education Task Force has met and need to get on track and continue the work which they started. His Grace will develop a lecture series for the entire diocese. Lectures and services will be expanded to a wider level, including in Advent. The focus will be on bringing in more people, centering on teens and college age youth.

Mr Bohlender commented that we need to work on building morale and leadership among the priesthood.

### **Diocesan Chancellor's Report**

The census figures are 3039 adults and 776 children and invalids + 3815 members.

A lawyer has been retained to make the title for our Diocesan Center. In two weeks, he will give a report on what's necessary to obtain a clear title. This will include purchase of the property from Saint Tikhon's Monastery. With Metropolitan Herman moving out of the Diocesan Center, an inventory will be taken, and it will be ready for our next Council meeting. Father Kovalak pointed out that the legal costs are being carried by the Diocese – not the monastery or seminary or Orthodox Church in America. Father Onufrey said however, that the lawyers for the Diocese are talking with the lawyers for the Orthodox Church in America.

The survey of the newly donated property in Estella, Pennsylvania has been completed. The process of obtaining all the legal documents is continuing.

The Diocesan Assembly will be held for one day at Saint Nicholas' Church, Bethlehem, on November 22, 2008.

### **Diocesan Treasurer's Report**

Father Browne presented a complete set of reports, statements, bank accounts, reimbursements and a proposed budget for 2009. Mr Bohlender suggested that a complete audit of the Diocesan funds be made, rather than a compilation audit. It has not been done for a long time, and he suggests that now is a good time for it. Father Onofrey suggested that \$5000.00 of the budget be designated for legal costs.

Father Onofrey moved to accept the corrected proposed Budget for the Diocesan Assembly, with no increase in the Diocesan assessment, seconded by Peter Bohlender. The motion passed. Father Onofrey moved to accept the Treasurer's Report subject to audit, seconded by Peter Bohlender. The motion passed.

### **Metropolitan Council Representatives' Report**

Father Onofrey reported on the last Metropolitan Council meeting. He said that the main thrust of the meeting was the review of the Special Investigative Committee's report. The legal questions were very onerous, given the insistence on transparency and fixing responsibilities.

Other business of the Council was a discussion of our Diocesan property and the Syosset property – its all ours, we are entitled to do whatever we want with it.

Various proposals were heard for the 'head tax'. Father Kovalak made a motion that the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania support the resolution of the Dioceses of Western Pennsylvania and the Midwest, to cap the OCA assessment at \$50.00 per person. The motion was seconded by Father Solak. It was defeated.

### **Old Business**

Blue Cross costs increase too much for various parishes to pay for insurance. Glen Wengren has done some research but could not find any way to decrease premiums because our policy is a small group policy, and the over- and under- usage, and the advanced age of members.

Father Hojnicky made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Father Hatrak. The motion passed and His Grace adjourned the meeting with a prayer at 3:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Archpriest John Udics, Diocesan Council Secretary