

Diocesan Council Minutes, November 19, 2013.
Assumption of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Church, Philadelphia

Present: Bishop Melchisedek, Bishop Mark, Fr. John Kowalczyk, Fr. Nicholas Solak, Fr. James Weremedic, Fr. Timothy Hojnicky, Fr. Victor Gorodenchuk, Fr. Mathew Cantrell, Mark Linnehan, David Yeosock, Douglas Yates Fr. Martin Browne,

Absent: Fr. Michael Hatrak, John Buckeye

His Grace Bishop Melchisedek opened the meeting with O Heavenly King at 10:15AM

Presentation by Mr. Nick Chakos of FOCUS

Introduced by Fr. Solak

- Hands on practical witness of our faith in action in a number of ways
- Designed to build families and communities
- Nick worked for IOCC in Africa, Kosovo, Syria
- Easier to work overseas than here in US. Here people are so broken, multigenerational family dysfunction. Very little to build on here.
- Based on Christ. Don't necessarily preach constantly, but live it out as a pure and visible witness to the ethos of the Orthodox Church.
- Meet people with unconditional love, open to criticism and to people "taking from us". But they notice something different.
- Two practical reasons –jobs and housing; permanent and sustainable jobs and housing.
 - Gateway services. Feeding, clothing.
 - 2013 – 120000 meals, 1100 people trained/employed, 513000 pcs of clothing given, 10000 volunteers (active), 1050 people given shelter and housing.
 - Partnerships with Starbucks and other retailers, corporations.
 - Cleveland – St. Herman's 70000 meals served. 3/day – 365 days a year
Phenomenal program: 26 men sheltered each night
Try to understand the gaps, add value and bring services truly needed.
Work with addicts, mentally ill, "deadbeat dads",
Transitional housing
- St. Panteleimon Orthodox Health Center in Pittsburgh (study with Rand Corp)
 - Target the uninsured
 - Pharmaceutical program with Duquesne U
 - 80 Orthodox physicians, surgeons, nurses.
 - Insured
- Backpack Feeding Program (study with Harvard)
 - 250 School Districts
 - 28 Cities
 - Operation Lace Up – 192500 homeless children in public schools
- Yes Program
 - Youth activities

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Motion: Fr. Martin, Fr. Tim seconded to make a donation of \$2000 to FOCUS from charity fund.
Unrestricted donation approved.

Answered questions

Minutes of August 12 Meeting

- Under Report of Locum tenens change to Review process for episcopal search
- Mark Linnehan, David Yeosock
- Approved

Report of Locum tenens

- September and October in Italy and Greece,
- conference at Bose, very important for Orthodoxy in Europe. On Orthodox spirituality. Encourage people to go and
- visit to monastery in Greece
- Since August filled Simpson, Edwardsville, McAdoo, Lopez (Fr. Dennis Hendershot, retired), Olyphant (AS), Old Forge.
- Fr. Soucek – lawsuit involved. Language of the lawsuit requires discretion. Legal counsel involved in California and NY.
- Holy Synod Meeting at the end of October: Got names for Search Committee. Given two names which he passed on.
 - Hopes that election can be done in conjunction with the Diocesan Assembly. Special Assembly, then Diocesan Assembly.
 - Visited Jermyn, Old Forge in recent weeks.

Question

MT health – on bed rest with antibiotics.

Assembly of Bishops meeting.

- Possibly workable plan for canonical restructuring of Orthodoxy in NA.
- U.S. divided into 9 provinces based upon population, 100,000 faithful in each. An Archbishop and 2-3 ruling bishops in that province answerable to him with overarching synod. Placed in jeopardy by Bulgarian bishop that there were 500,000 Bulgarian Orthodox in the U.S. requiring Bulgarians. This plan did not address this issue.
- Brought out that many who represent former Soviet Bloc, who would have been very much in favor of this are looking at new immigration and bringing clergy from old country.
- Workable plan, lot of thought put into it. There is provision for ethnic communities/deaneries so that new immigrants can be serviced in a congenial manner. Deemed insufficient by Bp. Daniel.

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- Abp. Nicholai (Romanian) presented the plan. Committee will be restructured and will include MT and reps of each ethnic jurisdiction.
- Question of what Chambessy authorized: Some interpreted it in terms of coming up with a plan (autonomous/autocephalous)

Report of Administrator

Visiting parishes.

Two centennial celebrations: Assumption of the Holy Virgin Philadelphia and Holy Ascension, Lykens.

Two 40th Anniversaries, Shillington and Gradyville.

Mount Carmel for Fr. Evans retirement. Fr. Evans living in Edwardsville.

Census Statistics

- 8/10 college students not returning to church – national statistic
- 2493 accounted for on census. 47% over the age of 65.
- Some parishes did not submit age data. Frackville, McAdoo, Shillington, Simpson.
- Need for addressing some specific demographics
- How do we do this?
- Address issues within the Church
- Take outside factors into consideration
- Questions of accountability on part of clergy and the parishes
- Clergy education
- Look in new areas
- Too much time spent on the hospice parishes
- Ministry – not just a clergy responsibility/privilege

Chancellor's Report/Episcopal Search Committee

- Focus on Episcopal Search
- Thank Bishop Melchisedek
- Committee met in Pottstown on Veterans Day. Good discussion. Two vetted candidates, Bishop Mark and Fr. Paul Gassios. Spoke with Fr. Gassios and asked him about candidacy. Fr. Gassios declined.
- Bishop Mark agreed to be candidate
- No negativity at the Search Committee meeting
- Provided Bishop Mark to three questions to answer for the committee.
- Meeting with Bishop Mark

Fr. Nicholas Solak

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- Mentioned failure to comply with resolution passed at the last Diocesan Council regarding names.
- Did Holy Synod ask Fr. Paul about being a candidate? Said he had been cleared twice before as a candidate for other dioceses. Was not consulted about Eastern Pennsylvania.

Mark Linnehan

- Discussion at the committee included disappointment we only received one candidate and if that was all then why not just tell us sooner.
- Does vetting include psychological tests and police background checks
- Bishop Mark had these done when he entered the OCA.

Fr. Weremedic:

- Were names on the list we submitted reviewed by the Holy Synod? Yes, but felt several were not well known enough and others were known but thought now they were not ready.

Fr. Timothy:

- What is the process from here? Who calls the Special Assembly? Interview and election, called by Locum tenens.

Look to come up with a date.

Thank Fr. Solak, Bp. Melchisedek

Bishop Mark added his thanks to Fr. Nicholas for his time.

Treasurer's Report/Auditor's Report

- Fr. Martin presented his report
- Aging summary questions were addressed. Some issues with the numbers were not known. Working to figure it out.
- Financial position there was a discrepancy between this year and last because of money spent on Diocesan Center renovations of heating/cooling system and roof/window repair
- Receivables: Pottstown, Lopez, McAdoo situations: decision needs to be made.
 - Write off Pottstown
 - McAdoo just got a priest, write off as a positive sign going forward
 - Lopez has a new priest as a shot in the arm, writing them off too.

Presentation of Proposed Budget

- 155 per person
- 63 – Diocese
- 92 – OCA
- Bishop salary was increased in an effort to get the bishop to a living wage.
- ~23% of last year's budget was cut to provide for the new episcopal compensation package.

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- Utilities were increased. There was a noticeable decline in the utility bills because of the extra work done to the Diocesan Center.
- Insurance: went up, budgeted accordingly.
- Archbishop Vestment fund was finally sent to the Metropolitan
- Census <125

Mark Linnehan made the motion made to offer \$1k to St. Vladimir, Lopez , in recognition for being current with their assessment, and as an incentive to working toward meeting their assessment. Fr. Weremedic Seconded. UNANIMOUS approval

Fr. Victor moved to give \$1k to Holy Trinity, McAdoo as assistance, and in recognition of the new possibilities of their community going forward. Fr. Martin Seconded. UNANIMOUS approval

Fr. Martin requests that when the new bishop is installed he would be relieved as Treasurer after serving for 7 years. Bishop Melchisedek says we will take this under advisement after the aforementioned bishop installation.

Fr. Nick Solak praised Fr. Martin for his work, and recommended that we begin to look for a new Treasurer.

Fr. Kowalczyk voiced his accolades for Fr. Martin for his good work, hoping he will change his mind, and thanked him on behalf of the council

Bishop's Travel there is a \$3k discrepancy as it was the last car payment.

Seminary Scholarships: It was asked whether the diocese should approve \$2k scholarships. The Seminaries requested 1% of each parish's budget. We will add \$2k to the 2014 Budget.

Motion to approve the Financial Report, subject to audit made by: Mark Linnehan. Seconded by Fr. Weremedic. UNANIMOUS approval

Fr. Weremedic suggested putting the new pension requirements (the 8% by the parish, 6% from the individual, and 6% of the housing allowance) towards the housing. ??? What is the rental amount of the property? \$5988.68? ←Not sure about all of this.

Motion to approve the 2014 Budget

Auditor Report:

David Y presented his report.

Suggested: Diocesan Credit Card from the former bishop be cancelled, and have a new card given to Diocesan Administrator Bishop Mark

EZ-Pass is still being charged to the Metropolitan's account.

Deanery Reports

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Wilkes-Barre

- -69 souls decrease
- Simpson, Dundaff, Nanticoke, being filled
- Old Forge: administration doing a good job in dealing with difficult situations.
 - o Bishop Melchisedek: cases must be handled quickly and cleanly
 - o NY doing background check

Frackville

- Fr. Timothy Hojnicky, Vice Dean, presented the report on behalf of Fr. Michael Hatrak
- Fr. Hatrak's mother ill in Pittsburgh
- Vacancies in Coaldale and Mt. Carmel, McAdoo filled. Lykens status quo.
- Fr. John Tokarick: with blessing of the Bishop contacted Bishop George.
 - o Lifted his suspicion and released him
 - o Going to different parishes offering help and then asked to leave
 - o St. Clair, Minersville, Frackville
- Holy Apostles broke ground on Oct 13. 118 people there. Meeting with building committee

Philadelphia

- Catasauqua open
- Fr. Stephen and Fr. Ian are settled in
- Prison Ministry meeting in August at St. Stephen's
- Clergy Family picnic well attended
- Lenten Schedule set in conjunction with clergy brotherhood
- Discussing a mission in King of Prussia

Parish Revitalization – Fr. Timothy Hojnicky

- One conference call since last meeting
- Bishop Mark put out the results of monthly reports from clergy.
- At Annapolis mission and in New York at their Diocesan Assembly
- Offering this presentation to our parishes: practical experience.

Communications/Website: Not here

Old Business:

- Mark Linnehan asked to put By-Laws on the agenda so it can be dealt with appropriately at the right time.

Bishop Mark:

- Copies of by-laws for every parish but two. As they have annual meetings, before blessing new Councils, will check with by-laws.

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- Working on unified by-laws

Fr. Nicholas Solak:

- Do we own the property under the diocesan center?
- David Yeosock – subdivision approved, committee has not met.

New Business

Appointment of replacements for Fr. Daniel Mathewson (now in W. Pa.) and Fr. Vladimir Fetcho (resigned).

- Fr. Stephen Vernak for Frackville
- Fr. Paul Shellbach for Wilkes-Barre

Metropolitan Council

Fundraising to replace assessments

Campaign: start with a website. Point and click.

Diocesan Assembly

One or two day: Fr. Nicholas Solak two day assembly with registration fee of \$99'

Motion to approve proposed budget

Fr. Solak

Fr. Tim

Motion to Adjourn

Fr. Weremedic

It is truly meet at 334

Schedule next meeting

Respectfully Submitted,

Priest Raymond Martin Browne
Diocesan Council Secretary