

Delegate Handbook

Volume 1

Ver July 15th, 2022

Instructions and Schedule



**Diocese of the West
Orthodox Church in America
2022 Diocesan Assembly
July 20th, 2022**

Meeting Held in Conjunction With

**The 20th All American Council
Hilton Baltimore Inner Harbor Hotel
Baltimore, MD**

Version July 15th, 2022
This is the FINAL version of this document

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DATE: July 8th, 2022

TO: All Assembly Delegates and Observers

FROM: 2022 Diocesan Assembly Committee

Please read the contents of this report carefully and in advance of the assembly. If necessary, print out a copy for your use at the Assembly. Have your questions prepared in advance. The following schedule is preliminary and subject to modifications.

Diocesan Assembly Schedule
Baltimore Hilton Hotel, Holiday Ballroom 6
July 20th, 2022 – Baltimore, MD

Wednesday, July 20th 2022	Event
6:00 PM	Registration of Assembly Delegates & Observers
6:30 PM	Diocesan Council Meets
7:00 PM	Molieben and First (and only) Plenary Session
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Welcome to Assembly – Archbishop BENJAMIN-Appointment of Assembly Officers and Secretariat-Acceptance of Minutes of 2021 Diocesan Assembly-Address of His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN-Charities – Archpriest Lawrence Russell-Treasurer’s Report – Mka Theodora Blom-Diocesan Budget, Presentation and Approval – Dorothy Nowik-Metropolitan Council Report – Mr David Lane-Background Checks and Ongoing Education – Priest Andrew Smith-Update on Parish Bylaw Revisions – Priest Andrew Smith-Orthodox Church Capital Improvement Fund (OCCIF)- Archpriest John Dresko-Retired Clergy Fellowship – Archpriest David Lowell-Clergy Wife Fellowship – Mka Elizabeth Powell-Elections-Closing Prayer
8:30 PM	Diocesan Council Meets

DIOCESE OF THE WEST
Minutes of the 2021 Diocesan Assembly
St. Paul Orthodox Church - Las Vegas, Nevada
October 12-14, 2021

Wednesday, October 13, 2021, 9:08 am - Opening Moleben

1st PLENARY SESSION

Archbishop BENJAMIN **opened** the Diocesan Assembly with prayer at 9:35 AM.

Credentials:

- 2 Hierarchs
- 49 Clergy
- 34 Lay Delegates
- 9 Observers
- 94 Total Participants

Appointment of Assembly Officers by His Grace Bishop DANIEL, Chancellor:

Co-Chairs: Clergy - Archpriest John Dresko, Lay - Eric Worth

Secretariat: Archpriest Damian Kuolt, Priest Andrew Smith, Matushka Elaine Lowell

Tellers: Sdn Dimitri Pletz, Jon Failla, Nicholas Soot, Reader Brendan O'Neill, Matushka Elizabeth Powell

MOTION to accept the appointments as submitted by Dorothy Nowik

SECOND Archpriest Lawrence Russell **PASSED**

Welcome: Archpriest John Dresko welcomed us to the meeting, addressing a number of 'housekeeping' details.

Minutes of 2020 Diocesan Assembly were presented as posted online

MOTION to accept the minutes with no changes by Archpriest Kirill Sokolov

SECOND by Archpriest Anthony Karbo **PASSED**

Address of His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN (posted in full on the Diocesan website). His Eminence addressed his health and diagnosis with Parkinson's Disease and its impact. His Eminence is considering retirement, and hoping it is sooner than later; his belief that it will be to the benefit of all. He addressed how the Corona virus has cause tension between everyone and challenged our unity. His Eminence has tried to guide us through these times as a shepherd who inspires his clergy, and who in turn lead their flocks to follow. What is important is the relationship freely entered into. His Eminence thanks all, especially Hieromonk Innocent for his generosity caring for Monk Barnabas. Monastic communities are building and expanding, and it is a good sign for the Diocese that the monastic communities are growing.

Thanks to Bishop Daniel for his wise council and support, and Priest Andrew Smith who also has helped in the administration of the Diocese.

Clergy new to the Diocese were introduced: Priest Serge Korkorin, Priest Gregory Mattling, Priest Augustin Lutin, Hieromonk Michael, Priest Peter Runyon, Hieromonk Mikhail, and Deacon Rodion Pfeifer.

Address of His Grace, Bishop DANIEL (posted in full on the Diocesan website). His Grace gave thanks for being able to meet together again, expressing the fullness of the Church gathered around the Archbishop. His Grace expressed special gratitude to His Eminence for his exceptional care and personal support to all. His Eminence was lauded for his service to the Diocese. Speaking to his own experience contracting of COVID-19 and serving others who suffered, and still suffer with long term effect, His Grace recounted how the Diocese was impacted. Moving forward, we need to be reminded that the Church is called to heal the world, beginning with each other.

Treasurer's Report (Posted in full on the Diocesan website). Treasurer Matushka Theodora Blom referred us to the Diocesan website, where monthly reports are posted to show the expense, income, and assets of the Diocese. This assembly there are summary reports that are easier to read.

The financial health of the parishes has not suffered in these times, so the Diocese is doing well also. Parishes, for the most part, transitioned quickly and effectively to online giving platforms during the pandemic. We are at 85% of budget for parish remittances for the year (on schedule for the year to date). The year-to-date financial report shows less than normal expenses (especially travel due to the pandemic), which gives us a surplus budget. The highest operating expenses as a percentage of total income are:

- a) 34% for support of the Archdiocese,
- b) 28% for salaries and benefits, and
- c) third largest percentage is for Missions.

The Diocese is committed to OCCIF, whose purpose is to lend to churches. We have invested a total of \$780,000, including the addition of a large reserve that was earning little interest. OCCIF gives us a 3.0% return for a 5-year commitment. Yearly interest earned at this investment level is \$26,020.

Sufficient cash reserves have been placed in low yield (but liquid) CDs. With this and Savings there is money available for the unexpected. Reserved funds of \$350,00 were advanced to the Russian Women's Home of Mercy to purchase a large property and home adjacent to St. Seraphim Cathedral, Santa Rosa, CA to provide Retired Clergy Housing. Discussions about the final terms of repayment are underway.

No internal audit this year, however we expect to have one next year. Matushka Theodora is willing to help on financial matters and offered a reminder for parishes to comply with tax and non-profit law.

Diocesan Budget. Dorothy Nowik, Financial Committee Chair, noted that a revised budget has been distributed. The Financial Committee consists of Archpriest John Dresko, Archpriest

Matthew Tate, and Dorothy Nowik. Each year they develop a proposed budget based on previous years' performance. Notes regarding unusual changes in the coming year budgets: increase in compensation was 5% due to a jump in cost of living; housekeeping help added as a new line item to support His Eminence; substantial increase in clergy moving due to reality of moving a household; seminary financial aid and intern program is increased to \$12,000 due to having more seminarians.

MOTION to accept the Budget by Dorothy Nowik
SECOND by Archpriest Basil Rhodes **PASSED**

Nomination Committee Report. Archpriest Matthew Tate spoke to the nomination process. Every year we have elections for Diocesan Council and Auditors. Nominations may be submitted to the committee throughout the course of the year. To make a nomination from the floor, the candidate must be proposed to the Diocesan Hierarchy ahead of time. There are none from the floor this year

Nominations were presented for the following:

Clergy Delegates to Diocesan Council (for 3 years): Archpriest Damian Kuolt, Priest David Morrison

Lay Delegates to Diocesan Council (for 3 years): David Lane, Catherine (Kitty) Mabus

MOTION to accept the slate by acclamation by Priest Steven Osborne
SECOND Archpriest Nazari Polataiko **PASSED**

Metropolitan Council (for 3 years): David Lane (currently serving, nominated to serve an additional 3 years)

MOTION to accept the nominee by Maria Rhodes-Labrecque
SECOND Archpriest Andrew Cuneo **PASSED**

Auditors (for 1 year): Priest Andre Paez, Michael Wagner, Norman Goldman

MOTION by to accept the slate of nominees Catherine (Kitty) Mabus
SECOND Archpriest Andreas Blom **PASSED**

Report on Retired Clergy Fellowship. Archpriests Ian MacKinnon and David Lowell gave a short report on the work of the Retired Clergy Fellowship. The first year of the new retired clergy fellowship (created by Archpriests MacKinnon, David Lowell, and Nicholas Kime). The Fellowship meets via Zoom and speaks on retirement issues as well as other edifying topics each month. October 26th, the next meeting will be on Mitered Archpriest Sergei Glagolev's life (open to ALL clergy) at 10 AM.

Diocesan Highlight #1. Hieromonk Michael (Mikhail) introduced himself and spoke about St John the Baptist Monastery, Phoenix, AZ. There are eight monks, and several more inquirers. They have purchased an 80-acre property in Casa Grande, AZ, and are working to acquiring funds to build a monastery there. They are thankful for the help coming from a parish and noted that fellowship between monastery and parishes is a blessing. Currently in the monastery is located in rented houses and only have one guest room but hope in the future to have guest quarters and welcome pilgrims to come and stay.

1st Session adjourned for lunch and Diocesan breakout Meetings at 11:10 AM

2nd PLENARY SESSION

The Assembly reconvened at 2:32 PM

Credentials:

- 2 Hierarchs
- 48 Clergy
- 35 Lay Delegates
- 9 Observers
- 94 Total Participants

In the first matter of business of the 2nd Session, Matushka Elizabeth Powell reported on the new OCA Clergy Wife group, through the office of Pastoral Life. Organizing quarterly zoom retreats and have renewed the clergy wife newsletter. Matushka Elizabeth encouraged all clergy wives to go to the clergy wife section on the OCA website to register for the directory if they are not already on it. Ongoing plans include a Matushki retreat at St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco Monastery in Manton, CA. Matushka Elizabeth serves on the Diocesan Council and therefore can serve as a liaison.

Proposed Standard Parish Bylaws. Bishop DANIEL spoke about the adoption of changes to the Statute of the OCA made at the 18th AAC in Atlanta in 2016. Article 18 become effective the statue replaces the previous and calls for all institutions to review its bylaws and make certain they conform to the new statute. All institutions (Dioceses, Monasteries, Parishes) were direct to review and edit their statutes and bylaws by December 31st, 2015. Standardized Parish Bylaws have existed in the Diocese since the 1990s, though it is noted that previous standardized bylaws have not been broadly adopted. As we are past the stated due date, and with delays due to COVID, the Proposed Bylaws are presented at this meeting - both Diocesan Bylaws and Standard Parish Bylaws. The Proposed Standard Parish Bylaws are conformed to the new Diocesan Bylaws and thus to the most recent OCA Statute.

David Lane, attorney, presented the changes to be adopted, referenced clarifications, and answered questions about the Diocesan Bylaws. Submission deadline for Parish Bylaws approved by the local parish is on or before March 1, 2022.

MOTION to accept the proposed Diocesan Bylaws by Archpriest Basil Rhodes
SECOND Archpriest John Tomasi **PASSED**

Regarding Parish Bylaws

- Error to be corrected under **Purpose, paragraph C:** will read "...establishment within the Diocese of the West, Orthodox Church in America, under the jurisdiction of the Diocesan Bishop."
- Each parish has the right to add additional provisions and make edits as they require. However, all bylaws must ultimately be approved by the Diocesan Hierarchy, submitted by March 1st, 2022.
- Submissions with changes must be highlighted upon presentation.
- If there are no amendments and the document matches the Standardized Document, approval is automatic.

- His Eminence will decide if changes comply with the Statue of OCA, which takes precedence to any desired changes.
- The purpose of the standard is to give a template that is in compliance. All Diocesan/Parish Bylaws are subordinate to the OCA. All Parish Bylaws are subordinate to the Diocese of the West
- His Grace spoke to process – adjust the standardized version, send to His Eminence for his blessing, submit to annual meeting, then submit to His Eminence for review and final approval.

MOTION to amend the text of Parish Bylaws verbiage in Article 4, section d, to base the quorum from “enrolled at the end of the calendar year preceding the date of the Meeting” to “enrolled at the end of the preceding month” by Archbishop Matthew Tate.

SECOND Deacon Alexei Kojenov **PASSED**

MOTION to accept the amended Parish Bylaws as presented by David Lane

SECOND Rachael Adams **PASSED**

Report of the Metropolitan Council (posted in full on the Diocesan website). David Lane reported that all meetings of the Metropolitan Council were conducted using Zoom this past year.

Communications. Priest Stephen Osburn (DOW Webmaster) gave the report in lieu of Department Head Archbishop John Dresko. He reported on website content and would like to see more social media activity, asks that we contact him with posts we want him to note. He requests a person from each deanery serve to get content for him to post. The content has drawn people to inquire and become catechumens.

Charities. Archbishop Lawrence Russell reported that there are four tiers of support for institutions related to the diocese: 1) selected institution support, 2) discretionary funds, 3) Lenten appeal, and 4) crisis emergency funds

1st tier institutions supported annually with a small allocation: Project Mexico, St. Petersburg Children’s Hospice, and the Gobezie Goshu Home.

2nd tier discretionary funds help with things like clergy counseling, insurance, etc.

3rd tier is the Lenten appeal for all parishes. The funds collected rotate between three charities:

Gobezie Goshu, St. Petersburg Hospice, and Project Mexico. Due to civil discontent, poverty, and displacement the Diocese wide appeal raised over \$53,000 for Gobezie Goshu, far more than in the past.

4th tier is for people in crisis. His Eminence has asked the Department of Charities to work with him and the Diocesan Treasurer to administer emergency relief funds for crises such as the recent wildfires.

Pension Board Update. Archbishop Matthew Tate reported recent events have affected the Pension Fund. First giving a context for discussion, he explained the Pension Board composition and the Pension’s history.

The Pension Board is comprised of one hierarch, three clergy, three lay persons, an attorney, and an actuary. The Pension consists of a Contribution Plan, which is always volatile, and a Defined Benefit Plan which is a stable amount based on the history of the contribution. As a

result of the 2008 recession, the Benefit Plan was changed so benefits reflected the time in the Plan *plus* the amount of contribution. Currently, funds can be taken by the beneficiary as Housing Allowance, even after retirement, which is an important benefit.

Discussion continued about the Pension's ongoing viability, noting that the Pension is never static. The number of people benefitting is growing year to year. The Pension has a strategy of hedging against potential loss, so when the markets are rising, the Plan does not rise as much, and if dropping it will not drop as much - contributing to long term stability and viability.

The working of the Pension is impacted by the average retirement age, which now is 72. However, people are living longer, thus the benefit payout continues longer. Based on this and other factors, parishes have had to increase their contribution with an additional 2% of salaries paid to clergy and staff. The number of people in the Plan is increasing, but we cannot project how many churches and clergy there will be in 10 years, so that is being worked on. Projections are out at 30 years. Given all factors, another 2% increase was proposed by the Pension Trustees to get the plan healthier, but overall is not acceptable.

Metropolitan TIKHON appointed Archpriest John Hopko, Mr. Andrew Smith (with professional history in Pensions), and Mr. Bob Kopatack to form a committee to review the health of the Pension Plan. As this work has proceeded, everyone was in agreement that the Pension Plan is a sacred trust and needs to stay healthy. Subsequently, the Metropolitan Council formed its own committee, which ultimately came to the same conclusion that the smaller committee, and the two merged - ultimately everyone working together about the care of the Pension Plan. Findings were presented to the Metropolitan Council at the last Zoom meeting. Both committees came to the same conclusion: to increase parish contributions to 12 percent, from the present 10 percent.

Archpriest Matthew then detailed the negative reaction to the current Pension raised at the recent Diocese of the South Assembly due to one Metropolitan Council member breaking the boundaries set by His Beatitude.

Monastic Life in the Diocese. Archbishop BENJAMIN noted that there are seven monasteries in the Dioceses – 2 communities for men and 5 communities for women. All are reasonably healthy and growing except one that is static. (See more in the report)

Orthodox Church Capital Investment Fund (OCCIF). Archpriest John Dresko serves as Chairman of the Board and CEO of OCCIF. Matushka Theodora, Diocesan Treasurer, also serves as OCCIF Treasurer. OCCIF is approaching \$4 million dollars in funding for various projects. Investors include parishes, three Dioceses, various individuals, and St. Vladimir's Seminary. Currently there are three feasibility studies for parish projects. OCCIF is looking for needs more projects to review refinancing a mortgage, building a church, remodeling, or expanding, etc.

Previously, individuals had to invest \$25,000 minimum, but now qualified investors can begin at \$5,000 while institutions had to invest \$50,000 minimum, now they can start at \$25,000. There is a sliding scale for rate of return, based on the amount invested or borrowed. All loans are 5-year Notes, using a 20/25-year amortization. At the end of the term, the Note needs to be refinanced or paid off with a 'balloon' payment. Investments are also 5-year Notes, so the

money is tied up for that period. The largest loan to date is \$1 million to a parish.

Deanery Reports (posted in full in Delegate Book #2, found on the Diocesan website):

Pacific Northwest Deanery – Archpriest Stephen Soot encouraged all to reference his report in Delegate Book #2

Pacific Central Deanery - Archpriest Basil Rhodes reported activities were down due to the pandemic but the breakout meeting this afternoon proved very fruitful for future planning.

Desert Deanery - Archpriest John Dresko, in addition to pointing to his posted report, requested prayers for Archpriest Michael Anderson.

Rocky Mountain Deanery - Archpriest Anthony Karbo reported that they had their first in-person Deanery Meeting between the feasts of the Dormition & Nativity of the Theotokos. For both feasts we hear the Lord say, “Martha, Martha, you are troubled about many things, but Mary has chosen that good part and it will not be taken away from her.” Archpriest Anthony noted that our parishes and people are ‘troubled about many things.’ The theme is mostly about what is that ‘good part;’ which is to place ourselves at feet of Christ. And we need to place ourselves in intercession for the those in these troubled times. The clergy challenged themselves: “Am I preaching the Gospel of Christ?”

Pacific Southwest Deanery – Archpriest Lawrence is asking prayers for Archpriest John Robinson and his family after the death of his wife, Bonnie (Ioanna) and for Archpriest Paul Waisanen recovering from surgery.

Missions Deanery – Archpriest Matthew Tate added to his report some things learned in the Deanery Meeting today: the ‘fish’ are jumping in the boat, especially 20–40-year-olds with children, and many missions are at capacity. He noted that the expense for missions to get a building is extremely high. He also expressed his appreciation for the support of the Diocese given to missions.

Diocesan Highlights 2. Priest Edward Henderson (St John the Baptist Church, Berkeley, CA) detailed his work with Fort Ross for the Diocese. He reported on his work with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad and traveling to Anga, Irkutsk (Siberia, Russia) setting up an exhibit of St. Innocent’s work.

Adjourned for the day at 4:39 PM

3rd PLENARY SESSION

Thursday, October 14th the session was opened at 11:00 AM with “The Grace of the Holy Spirit”

Credentials:

- 2 Hierarchs
- 46 Clergy
- 35 Lay Delegates
- 7 Observers
- 90 Total Participants

Diocesan Elections. Archpriest Matthew Tate asked for nominations from the floor, noting that

nominees must have agreed to serve, and must have been approved by the Archbishop.
Hearing no nominations, he presented the slate of candidates for Assembly approval:

- Diocesan Council – Clergy (3-year term): Archpriest Damian Kuolt, Priest David Morrison
- Diocesan Council – Laity (3-year term): David Lane, Katherine (Kitty) Mabus
- Metropolitan Council – Clergy (3-year term): No Election
- Metropolitan Council – Laity (3-year term): David Lane
- Auditors (1-year term): Priest Andre Paez, Michael Wagoner, Norman Goldman

MOTION to accept slate of candidates as presented by Dorothy Nowik

SECOND by Archpriest John Dresko **PASSED**

RESOLUTIONS presented by Archpriest Matthew Tate:

- 1) BE IT RESOLVED that we commend and thank the Trustees and Staff of the OCA Pension for their diligence and service to the Church.

MOTION to adopt the Resolution by Archpriest John Dresko

SECOND by Maria Rhodes-Labrecque **PASSED**

- 2) BE IT RESOLVED that we embrace the OCA Pension and encourage the Metropolitan Council to take all necessary steps to ensure its long-term health & viability.

MOTION to adopt the Resolution by Archpriest David Thatcher

SECOND by Priest Stephen Osburn **PASSED**

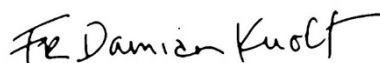
Having no other business:

MOTION to Adjourn the Assembly by Priest Steve Osburn

SECOND by Dorothy Nowik **PASSED**

Adjournment: October 14, 11:10 AM with a closing prayer by His Grace, Bishop DANIEL,

Respectfully submitted by,



Archpriest Damian Kuolt, Diocesan Council Secretary

October 16, 2021

OCA Metropolitan Council
Attn: His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON
PO Box 675
Sysosset, NY 11791

TO: Your Beatitude, Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, and Esteemed Lay Members of the Metropolitan Council:

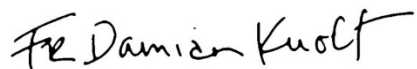
Most Blessed Master Bless!

On October 14, the Diocese of the West Annual Assembly unanimously passed the following resolutions:

BE IT RESOLVED that we commend and thank the Trustees and Staff of the OCA Pension for their diligence and service to the Church.

BE IT RESOLVED that we embrace the OCA Pension and encourage the Metropolitan Council to take all necessary steps to ensure its long-term health & viability.

Asking the prayers of Your Beatitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Damian Kuolt". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

V. Rev. Damian Kuolt
Secretary, Diocesan Council, Diocese of the West

October 16, 2021

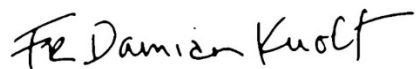
OCA Pension
Attn: Reverend Gleb McFatter and Michael Stieglietz
PO Box 8121
Hicksville, NY 11802-8121

Dear Fr. Gleb, Trustees, and Staff,

On October 14, the Diocesan Assembly unanimously passed the following:

BE IT RESOLVED that we commend and thank the Trustees and Staff of the OCA Pension for their diligence and service to the Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Damian Kuolt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

V. Rev. Damian Kuolt
Secretary, Diocesan Council, Diocese of the West