

DIOCESAN COUNCIL MINUTES

DIOCESE OF THE WEST

February 8, 2023

His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN convened a meeting of the Diocesan Council at 10:35am on Wednesday, February 8, 2023

DIOCESAN COUNCIL MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT - Archpriest Lawrence Russell, Archpriest John Dresko, Archpriest Matthew Tate, Archpriest Stephen Soot, Archpriest Anthony Karbo, Archpriest Lawrence Margitich, Archpriest Michael Anderson, Archpriest Damian Kuolt, Archpriest Kirill Sokolov, Archpriest Andrew Cuneo, Priest David Morrison, Priest Edward Henderson, Mka. Theodora Blom, Mka. Elizabeth Powell, David Lane, Dorothy Nowik, Lynnell McFarland, Catherine Mabus.

GUESTS: Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Archpriest David Lowell, Priest Andrew Smith

OPENING PRAYER

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

MOTION to accept the minutes of the previous meeting by Fr. Matthew T.

SECOND by Fr. Edward H. **PASSED**

ARCHBISHOP'S REPORTS - Abp. BENJAMIN gave an update on his health and the difficulty walking, speaking, and responding to correspondence. He offered thanks to Fr. Kirill S., for his assistance in responding to the needs of the Diocese, Fr Andrew S. for managing the administrative tasks, Mka. Theodora for her financial assistance to the clergy and their wives, David L. for his legal support, Leo as a committed aide. To all the Diocesan Council and the Deans, thank you for all that is done in the life of the Diocese. Our lay participation in the work of the Diocese, along with clergy, is unique amongst the autocephalous Orthodox Churches. His Eminence spoke regarding his experience and admiration of the newly reposed Bishop TIKHON. Upon his passing, with no instructions, will or family contacts, the Diocese spent some time to finally be able to conduct his funeral and burial. A Transition Committee for His Eminence's future retirement was appointed, consisting of Fr. Kirill S., Fr. Lawrence s., Fr. John D., and Dorothy N. His Eminence continued with a report of highlights from around the Diocese (*Full Report posted on Diocesan Website*)

CHANCELLOR'S REPORT - Archpriest Kirill S. expressed his love and thanks for His Eminence, and for making it easy to bring the needs of the Diocese to him. Archpriest Lawrence M. has been appointed to replace Archpriest Basil R. as Dean of the Pacific Central Deanery. He appreciates the Deans' ongoing communication about many items that come up in the life of the Diocese. He emphasized the unique model that is found in the OCA; that we need to be aware that it is something looked upon around the world given the special needs of events happening in our modern times. There has been some worry about the slightly shrinking parishes in California, and the background stress of parish life, financial and social pressures that affect us. However, there is a sense of a 'bounce back' post pandemic.

TREASURER'S REPORT - Mka. Theodora B. reports that the numerous CDs were closed and rolled into two: one is 13-month @ 3.75%, and another 5-month CD @ 4.5% yield. All bank and investment accounts were closed, and new ones opened with Fr. Kirill S as added signatory. Missions and scholarship funds are rolled into these larger interest-bearing accounts. Pt. Reyes' accounts are closed, no longer to be tracked separately, and absorbed into operating accounts. Largest expense overages are due to the funeral of Bishop TIKHON and most, if not all, should be reimbursed when his surviving estate is settled. Of Note: surprise expenses are always possible, and we do not budget for all 'possible' expenses, though legal does have a rolling accumulation for future needs. Other items could be accumulated as 'prepaid expense' if needed. The approved Budget for 2023 was adjusted, as it was prepared in June, as the 2% increase for Pension Plan approved that the ACC needed to be added, and a 5% increase for Housekeeping was missed. 2022

remittances were short about \$25K and given the rise in expected remittances in the current budget, we may have trouble reaching it. As of today, 64% of remittance forms have not been received, while the deadline is February 28, 2023. Note, that \$15K each was sent to the Dioceses of Alaska and Mexico, which amount was not in the 2022 budget.

FINANCE COMMITTEE Dorothy N. presented the following:

MOTION that the Diocesan Council authorizes adding up to \$13,000 to the Charities line-item to support the funeral expenses of His Grace, Bishop TIKHON and requests reimbursement as possible from the estate of the newly departed hierarchy by Dorothy N.

SECOND by Fr. Anthony K. **PASSED**

Fr. John D. noted there is a need to begin adding to the financial committee, introducing the upcoming generation of leadership to the work of the committee.

DEANS/DEANERIES Archpriest Kirill S. lead discussion on the following:

- **Archpriest Stephen Soot – Pacific Northwest Deanery:** A successful deanery meeting was well attended, with honest conversation about the flux in the parishes. It included Fr. Matthew, who reported that it was quite encouraging, showing an uptick in activity in the Deanery.
- **Archpriest Lawrence Russell – Pacific Southwest Deanery:** No changes in clergy assignments, with everything continuing as usual. Santa Maria paid off their mortgage and a consecration is being planned.
- **Archpriest Michael Anderson – Desert Deanery:** Two new priests have been assigned in two parishes, as well as his own relatively recent assignment. They are meeting monthly with the San Diego area parishes. His own parish is getting the frescos finished.
- **Archpriest Lawrence Margitich – Pacific Central Deanery:** Archpriest Basil Rhodes stepped down as Dean. Noted is the Lenten retreat that just occurred, which attracted about 150 people. The last meeting was in December. Presanctified Liturgy for the deanery will be held on St. Patrick's Day.
- **Archpriest Matthew Tate – Missionary District:** A consecration of both Annunciation temples may happen in 2024. The Mission Deanery retreat has been missed and was quite successful. Along with a speaker, there was time to share the highlights and challenges of each mission, and plenty social time. Note: our success of nearly 90% of our missions is the complete opposite of past trends.
- **Archpriest Anthony Karbo – Rocky Mountain Deanery:** Things are a bit unsettled, and he is addressing requests for clergy needs and reassignment. There is still some unraveling of the problems of a 'wild-west attitude' towards the Covid impact.

DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY - Archpriest Kirill S. reminds us that the assembly will be October 24-26, 2023 in Santa Rosa, California. The schedule is being developed, including time for small groups, and a fuller evening program. More announcements will be coming out soon. A larger budget was approved for the assembly.

COMMUNICATIONS - Archpriest John D. reports that things are status quo. The benefit of having a 'Chancellor's Corner' for regular messaging, a rotating deanery spotlight, pastoral reflections encouraged, as well as sending anything in regarding events was discussed. Abp. BENJAMIN's Lenten Message to be posted soon.

YOUTH, CAMPS, EDUCATION - Archpriest Michael A. has been having meetings and sharing common camp forms. There will be a budget request of approx. \$8,000 next year for online software to make managing camps and participants easier (registration, scholarships, online payment, etc.)

LEGAL / BYLAWS REVISIONS, ETC. - David L. reports there are currently no legal actions.

COMPLIANCE - Priest Andrew S. reports that 13 parishes that have not yet mailed back their new Bylaws. PSP reports are due this coming Friday, February 24, 2023 and there are still a number outstanding. Now there is less pressure from the State of California regarding their requirements, as full enforcement is not yet in place. However, that does not change the need to get everything submitted as soon as possible.

CLERGY WIVES - Mka. Elizabeth P. reported that the Clergy Wives have been given a budget of \$33K by the OCA. Gifts were given to the 120 widows identified in the OCA, and soon they will start holding Zoom Retreats. Work is underway with the Metropolitan to develop a gratitude packet for them. Hosted a pre-Lenten retreat; OCA website has everything. About 500 of the 1,000 clergy wives are in their email list, and they are actively trying to improve that. Within the DOW, the PNW Deanery has been getting together more and more. Another annual luncheon is in planning. Also, within the deanery there are new clergy wives that need to be reached out to. November there will be a weekend retreat at St. John Monastery; this will be an annual event.

OFFICE OF PASTORAL LIFE - Archpriest David L. reports dates are set for a national gathering of clergy Oct 17-19 in Chicago. Noted was that the last one was in 2000. The idea is to have it every three years, a year after the All-American Council. Office of Pastoral Life has been working on the Thriving in Ministry Peer Learning groups. The first one of these for clergy in our diocese will be headed by Fr. Stephen S., with Mka. Mona S. doing one for the clergy wives. The previous work of the office of continuing education will be taken up also. Bishop ALEXEI and Fr. Kirill S. are working on the updated Clergy Guidelines. Portions relating to minor clergy are somewhat modeled on the treatment in the DOW. The focus is not on major changes, rather clarifying and addressing current issues. Baptism of converts is addressed in context marriage.

RETIRED CLERGY FELLOWSHIP - Archpriest David L. reported that this fellowship meets every month. The next meeting, March 7th there will be a meeting to reflect on our newly reposed Hierarch, Bishop Tikhon. Previously it has focused on missions work since World War II. Topics are targeted to retired clergy, but open to others, including to outside the Diocese.

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL/PENSION PLANS - David L. reported on the discussion about mission grants, increasing it to two first year grants, and increasing the amounts. Pursuing the sale of the Chancery in Syosset, NY (there is an auxiliary chancery), is continuing. The insurance company refunds monies not used, which will be passed through to parishes (~\$37,000 this year). Oversight of the Pension Board will involve two new committees – one from the Metropolitan Council and one formed by the Synod. It was noted that the 2% increases to the amount contributed is having a very positive affect on the funding of the Pension.

CHARITIES - Archpriest Lawrence R. reports charitable contributions originally for the St. Petersburg Hospice were re-assigned due to lack of a conduit for sending funds. Tzige Roman has reposed, and the internal war has prevented sending money in support of the Gobezie-Goshu Home. Support for both of these charities has been halted for now until there is a better way to get money through. This year the Lenten appeal is for the Diocese of Alaska, to support the Clergy. Other institutions may be considered in the future. Discretionary funds have not been asked for much. It is time to rethink which charities to support.

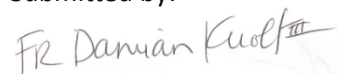
OCCIF UPDATE - Archpriest John D. reported they held their annual meeting held last week. There have been \$5 million funded over its history. Rates for investors are now streamlined to only three tiers, with interest rates: 3%, 3.5%, & 4%. They are trying to bring in new board members; three being interviewed, and soliciting for more candidates, who will eventually replace those who as they move off the board.

SEMINARIAN UPDATE - Archpriest Matthew T. reports St. Tikhon Seminary has four strong candidates for the priesthood in 2024, with one 'maybe'. 2025 has one each coming from St Tikhon and St. Vladimir Seminary.

NEXT MEETINGS - Diocesan Council will meet via ZOOM on June 7th at 10:30 AM PST.

CLOSING PRAYER & ADJOURNMENT – Abp. Benjamin adjourned the meeting of the Diocesan Council at 1:20 PM.

Submitted by:



Archpriest Damian Kuolt, Secretary