

# DIOCESAN COUNCIL MINUTES

## DIOCESE OF THE WEST

May 22, 2024

**His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN** convened a meeting of the Diocesan Council via ZOOM, with an opening prayer at 1:30pm on Wednesday, May 22, 2024

**DIOCESAN COUNCIL MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT** Archbishop Benjamin, Archpriest Kirill Sokolov, Archpriest Lawrence Russell, Archpriest Matthew Tate, Archpriest Lawrence Margitich, Archpriest Stephen Soot, Archpriest Damian Kuolt, Archpriest Michael Anderson, Archpriest Andrew Cuneo, Archpriest David Morrison, Priest Edward Henderson, Priest Peter Runyon, Priest Daniel Lattier, Matushka Theodora Blom, David Lane, Dorothy Nowik, Catherine Mabus, Katie Huff. Observers: Archpriest John Dresko, Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Archpriest David Lowell, Priest Andrew Smith

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING** – Accepted as distributed.

**ARCHBISHOP’S REMARKS** Archbishop Benjamin’s gave his report [*Report posted on DOW website*]

**CHANCELLOR’S REMARKS** Archpriest Kirill Sokolov gave his report [*Report posted on DOW website*]

**TREASURER’S REPORT** Matushka Theodora Blom reports that the operating P&L shows a \$50K surplus: Charity has a restricted amount \$11K+ for the Diaconal Practicum, and there is \$5,200 from the appeal for Mexico. Payments from Home of Mercy have resumed and are current. The one remaining operating CD account that was with First Republic is now with Chase Bank, since its acquisition. There is about \$750K in Chase, as Thriving Congregations (TCI) funds. In a few months we will need to use cash reserves from operating account to float the Diocese until CDs mature. This is in lieu of cashing out the TCI CDs, due to early withdrawal

**MOTION:** Use Operating Funds to stopgap the shortfall until TCI CDs Mature; moving \$35,000.00 to provide a buffer, by Fr. Matthew Tate

**SECOND:** Fr. Michael Anderson **PASSED**

[*see Financial Reports posted on DOW website*]

**REPORT OF FINANCE COMMITTEE** Dorothy Nowik calls for 2025 budget requests by July 31, 2024.

### DEANS/DEANERIES UPDATES:

- **Archpriest Stephen Soot– Pacific Northwest Deanery:** Lots of visits in Deanery, all parishes in good shape, met with parish councils. Portland, Tacoma, and Seattle – next up is a trip to Kirkland.
- **Archpriest Matthew Tate – Missionary District:** Requested Vladyka to bless getting stats regarding Catechumens. Deans to discuss: How many baptisms/chrisinations, gender, age 18, etc. and these things in relation to the new Church Initiatives project. Email coming with more details
- **Archpriest Lawrence Margitich - Pacific Central Deanery:** Fr Laurent has just departed St. Innocent Church in Eureka, CA., and he has scheduled occasional Saturday Liturgies. Also waiting for replacements for St Christina in Fremont and St. Innocent in Pleasanton
- **Archpriest Lawrence Russell – Pacific Southwest Deanery:** On September 7<sup>th</sup>, the consecration of Annunciation, Santa Maria, will be celebrated
- **Archpriest Michael Anderson – Desert Deanery:** Of note is St. Katherine, Carlsbad, coming into the Deanery. He mentioned St. Paul, Las Vegas, and would follow up regarding questions about the priest’s compensation package
- **Archpriest David Morrison - Rocky Mountain Deanery:** Welcome to Fr. Andreas Blom, and many thanks to retired priests covering as changes take place. We are all missing Archpriest Anthony. Breaking

ground on new Temple at St. Anthony, Bozeman. St. Nicholas, Billings, going through expansion; Vladyka's encouragement had very positive impact to their moving forward.

**COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE** Archpriest John Dresko reports everything is status quo. Website is continuing to be updated regularly. All the activities and transitions taking place in the Diocese are newsworthy and will be posted as appropriate. It gives an opportunity to focus on the past and the new pastors of those parishes in transition. In the spirit of 'following through,' a list of the transitions will be provided to Fr. John, and he will contact each parish with a request for a photograph of the new pastor and family and appropriate details for a posting.

**YOUTH, CAMPS, EDUCATION** Archpriest Michael Anderson will be back participating in youth camps and is encouraged about clergy around the diocese participating. Exploring (with Yanni from Crossroads), Telos Project - engaging Young adults participating in ministries with their parishes.

**LEGAL COMMITTEE** David Lane reports that currently there are no problems

**COMPLIANCE/BACKGROUND CHECKS** - Priest Andrew Smith reports all compliance up to date, with greater proportion of our clergy 'up for renewal' on Background Checks and Training. Vladyka requires background checks for PC members. It is a requirement as posted on the DOW website.

**CLERGY WIVES FELLOWSHIP** Matushka Elizabeth Powell announced a June retreat with Bishop Daniel on canonization of Mka. Olga. Meeting in Washington, DC in August to plan for the year, and hopefully with His Beatitude and Bishop Nikodim, advisor. Planning underway on AAC. At the Diocesan Assembly there will be a luncheon. Will be looking for Fr. Innocent to host a November retreat (planning underway)

**RETIRED CLERGY FELLOWSHIP** Archpriest David Lowell reports that meetings are happening regularly. Last meeting was about being a 'good' temporary priest. Not all retired priests are actively participating in the fill-in, practical side of the role. Fr. Ian reaffirms and speaks to the confessional role. Confessional life topic was attended by nearly twenty zoom attendees.

**METROPOLITAN COUNCIL / PENSION PLAN** Archpriest Matthew Tate and David Lane report. His Beatitude appointed three members to work out changes needed for the Pension. Most amendments were adopted, after a detailed review. Changes were accepted by the Metropolitan Council and Holy Synod. No increases to the 14% (parish) and 6% (member) contributions. A mandate for participation, with penalty provisions, provides a January 1, 2025, deadline for the parish to make the 14% contribution, even if the priest is not eligible due to age, or the priest is not contributing. Exceptions where the priest is not being paid. Exceptions for the Diocese of Alaska. If a priest is 'aged out,' the parish must continue to pay in, The Pension should be in great shape if the new amendments are complied with. There is now clear support by the full Holy Synod, the Metropolitan Council, and the committees that worked on it. High level of compliance is the new norm. The goal is paying out from Pension income, so the current level of investment money in place is not tapped into. Ultimately, they are making the fund healthy, with steps put into place for the best possible funding level, so the forward-looking 20 years look solid. Now impressed with the process and it speaks to the good will of the Church, and the Metropolitan Council.

**ADDITIONAL PENSION PLAN COMMENTS:** Fr. John D. relates that two years ago it was very difficult and lots of acrimony. First, there has been a Total turnaround; people who were difficult have become reasonable. The Holy Spirit worked on everyone's hearts and minds. Second, the change happened with the appointment of the new General Council (Mark Hamilton), an Orthodox Christian and a lawyer. He made certain that everyone understood the OCA was liable for Pension Plan failure. Third, three days after meeting with Holy Synod in April, the Metropolitan came out with an edict about the Pension plan being Mandatory. That 'executive leadership' made an enormous difference. The one constant for stability of the Pension plan, is full participation. Fr Matthew noted that noncompliance means IRS can come after the OCA.

**SALE OF PROPERTY** – Also reported is that the details of the sale of Syosset are not available, but there is a reasonable offer and 1 to 1 ½ years of due diligence is needed to close. The proposed buyer will be covering our operating costs during that time.

**CHARITIES** Archpriest Lawrence Russell has nothing new to report. However, there will be future appeals to consider.

**THRIVING PARISHES PROJECT/GRANT** Priest Andrew Smith reports on all four phases

1. **PARISH DEVELOPMENT** – Will be meeting with Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff about his experience and program with parish development. There was training on how to use a tool, with statistics for 100K parishes. Fr John I. has worked with 70+ parishes. Fr Jonathan’s presentation encouraged all who attended. There will be two ‘pilot parishes’: St Seraphim, Santa Rosa, CA & St. Herman, Littleton, CO
2. **SUPPORT**– Support is targeted for the Rector and Lay leader, which is the most we have to do to get started. Something monthly planned, related to: Support Groups, Thriving Ministry Synaxis meetings, a portal on DOW website going with content, etc.
3. **VOCATIONS** – Fr Barnabas Powell is going to take up the role of Vocations Director.
4. **YOUTH MINISTRY VOCATION**–The Pacific Central Deanery sent the first cohort (5 young adults and a priest) this past April for Crossroads 2.0 training. This lets us see how an Orthodox Group implements the Lilly grant they received.

**HOME OF MERCY** Fr Lawrence reports that the property purchased is directly next to St. Seraphim. His Parish is looking forward to His Eminence being in residence there. The current tenant moves out in July, and His Eminence moves in August. Making a new walkway and bridge. Fr Damian and Fr. David Lowell are helping with the future vision of this ministry. County requirements are being investigated.

#### **OTHER OLD BUSINESS**

- Annunciation Parish, Milwaukie OR will host the 2024 Assembly, to be held October 15—17, 2024. Timeline: June 1<sup>st</sup> we typically put out the information, so it needs to be put together as soon as possible. July requests for reports go out, due September 1. His Beatitude will be attending.
- Next summer, the AAC is in the DOW. We should keep July 18, 2025, available for our Diocesan Assembly and plan to return Saturday, July 19<sup>th</sup>.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

- none

#### **NEXT MEETINGS -**

At Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco: Advisory meeting Monday, August 26, 2024, at 2:30 pm and Diocesan Council meeting Tuesday, August 27, 2024, at 10:30am.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN** by Fr. Michael Anderson

Abp. BENJAMIN lead us in “Shine, shine...” and the meeting adjourned at 12:11 pm PST.

#### **ADDITIONAL DIOCESAN BUSINESS, CONDUCTED VIA EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE**

**August 1, 2024:**

**MOTION** by M. Theodora: to use Diocese of the West FY2023 surplus funds to raise our “default” scholarship for seminarians from \$1,000 to \$3,000.

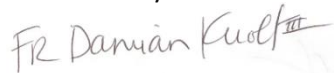
**SECOND** by Fr. Damian Kuolt      **PASSED**

**MOTION** by M. Theodora: to use up to \$30,000 of Diocese of the West FY2023 surplus funds for three seminarians with special needs, for larger scholarships, as blessed by the Archbishop. Further, that selected seminarians will be required to sign an appropriate letter committing themselves to a timespan of service in the Diocese of the West, as designated by the Archbishop.

**SECOND** by Fr. Damian Kuolt

**PASSED**

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fr. Damian Kuolt" followed by a stylized flourish.

Archpriest Damian Kuolt, Secretary