

DELEGATE HANDBOOK

VOLUME 1

INSTRUCTIONS AND SCHEDULE

Updated October 2, 2024



Diocese of the West
Orthodox Church in America
2024 Diocesan Assembly
October 15th-17th, 2024

*Meeting Courtesy of
Church of the Annunciation
Milwaukie, Oregon*

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The Diocese of the West
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
Most Rev. Archbishop BENJAMIN of
San Francisco
1520 Green Street, San Francisco, CA 94123-5102
(415) 567-WEST (9378)

We are very much looking forward to being all together for our annual Diocesan Assembly in Milwaukie, OR! Our immense thanks to Fr. Matthew Tate and the Church of the Annunciation for hosting us. We are honored by the presence of His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON.

Please check the Assembly website for reports and save a copy to your mobile device or print out a copy for your use during the Assembly. We are striving to have all reports submitted in advance for due consideration and to have short highlights of certain reports during our meetings. The following schedule is preliminary and subject to modifications.

2024 Diocesan Assembly Schedule

Church of the Annunciation
Milwaukie, OR
October 15-17, 2024

Tuesday, October 15

Time	Event	Location
2:30 PM - 4:00 PM	Meeting with New Clergy	<i>Church of the Annunciation</i>
3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Registration of Assembly Delegates & Observers	<i>Parish Hall</i>
4:00 PM	Diocesan Council Meeting	<i>Location TBA</i>
5:00 PM	Vespers	<i>Church of the Annunciation</i>
6:30 PM	Dinner Meeting of the Diocesan Council, Department Heads, and Deans	<i>Location TBA</i>
	All other delegates: Dinner on own	<i>Nearby restaurants</i>

Wednesday, October 16

Time	Event	Location
7:30 AM	Continental Breakfast	<i>Parish Hall</i>
8:00 AM	Registration of Assembly Delegates & Observers	<i>Parish Hall</i>
9:00 AM	Molieben and First Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Molieben• Appointment of Assembly Officers & Secretariat• Acceptance of Minutes of 2023 Diocesan Assembly• Address of His Beatitude, Archbishop TIKHON• Address of His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN• Greeting of Archpriest Alexander Rentel, OCA Chancellor• Chancellor's Report - Archpriest Kirill Sokolov• Treasurer's Report – Matushka Theodora Blom• Diocesan Budget – Ms Dorothy Nowik• Nomination Committee Report	<i>Church of the Annunciation</i>
12:00 PM	Lunch	<i>Parish Hall</i>
	Clergy Wives Luncheon	<i>Matushka Lori Jenson's Home</i>
1:00 PM	Deanery Meetings	<i>Locations TBA</i>
2:00 PM	Second Plenary Session Responding to His Beatitude's Call for Reflections (discussion groups)	<i>Church of the Annunciation</i>
3:30 PM	Reports Continue <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Metropolitan Council• Pension Board• Update on Church Relations - Archpriest Alexander Rentel• Charities Highlight – Archpriest Lawrence Russell• Deanery Highlights – Deans (reports distributed in advance)• Clergy Wives Advisory Group – Matushka Elizabeth Powell• Youth, Camps, and Education• Orthodox Church Capital Investment Fund (OCCIF)	
5:30 PM	Vespers	<i>Church of the Annunciation</i>
6:30 PM	Dinner <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address of His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON• Closing Remarks by His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN	<i>Parish Hall</i>

Thursday, October 17

Time	Event	Location
7:00 AM	Check out of hotel	
8:00 AM	Hierarchical Divine Liturgy	<i>Church of the Annunciation</i>
10:00 AM	Brunch	<i>Parish Hall</i>
11:00 AM	Third Plenary Session <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elections of Diocesan Council• Sharing from previous day's discussions• Adjournment	<i>Church of the Annunciation</i>
End of Third Plenary Session and Assembly		
12:30 PM	Brief Meeting of the Diocesan Council	<i>Location TBA</i>

DIOCESE OF THE WEST
Minutes of the 2023 Diocesan Assembly
St. Seraphim of Sarov Cathedral, Santa Rosa, CA
Wednesday, October 25-26, 2023

Opening Moleben

Archbishop BENJAMIN opened the Diocesan Assembly and Moleben was served by Diocesan Chancellor Archpriest Kirill Sokolov and Deacon Justin Margitich.

PLENARY SESSION 1 - began @ 9:15 am.

Appointment of Assembly Officers and Secretariat

Clergy Chair: Archpriest Kirill Sokolov

Lay Chair: Dorothy Nowik

Secretariat: Archpriest Damian Kuolt, Priest Andrew Smith, Lynnell McFarland

Credentials:

2 Hierarchs

54 Clergy

45 Lay Delegates

6 Observers

105 Total Participants

Minutes of the 2022 Diocesan Assembly

MOTION to accept the Minutes by Archpriest Basil Rhodes

SECOND by Archpriest Andreas Blom **PASSED**

Address of His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN (*Posted on the Diocesan website*)

Memory Eternal to His Grace, Bishop Tikhon (Fitzgerald), who departed in January, was sung by the Assembly.

Greeting of His Eminence, Bishop ALEXEI. His Grace reflected on the joy of one Orthodox Christian meeting another, especially of the same tradition. He then proceeded to mention points of connection between the Diocese of Alaska and the Diocese of the West, including St. Peter the Aleut's martyrdom in San Francisco, and the travels of St. Innocent of Alaska to the territory of the West. In fact, the two dioceses have even shared bishops at times. His Grace thanked His Eminence for the invitation to be present and for his support.

Greeting of Archpriest Alexander Rentel, Chancellor of the OCA

Fr. Alexander R. noted he would be speaking in the afternoon and give a more in-depth account of his activities as OCA Chancellor and regarding international relations.

At this time he reflected on his visit to the West four years ago when he was a professor at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary; though it was a poorly kept secret that he had been chosen to take the role of chancellor.

At the ethnic Liturgies at the AAC in Baltimore he noted the vast geographical range and diversity of the OCA and the lofty aspirations we have as Christians and the Church in this land. God has chosen us, the faithful of the Orthodox Church in America, to solve the problems set before us in these sacred assemblies. He conveyed greetings from His Beatitude Metropolitan TIKHON and gave a short overview of some of the local work going on in the OCA in the present time.

Looking into the near future, work is already being done for the 2025 All American Council in Phoenix, AZ (Diocese of the West).

Mr. Mark Hamilton from Pittsburgh (St. Nicholas, McKee's Rocks, PA) will serve as the new legal counsel for the OCA after Judge ER Lanier's retirement. Also singled out is Diocesan Council Member, Mr. David Lane, for his work for the Church.

He noted a very successful clergy retreat last week in Chicago (130 clergy participating). He also spoke on the relocation of the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America. Presently there is a new (and temporary) location in Springfield, VA. We have two or three realistic buyers (developers) for the Syosset property. OCA archives have been relocated from the basement in Syosset to St. Vladimir's Seminary.

Chancellor's Report – Archpriest Kirill Sokolov (*Posted on the Diocesan website*)

Treasurer's Report - Matushka Theodora Blom (*Financial Reports can be found on the Diocesan website*)

Financial information is posted on the DOW website every month, going back to 2004. Financial reports for 2022 and YTD through Sept 1st, 2023, are in volume 4 of the delegate book in a more condensed format. 2023 is in much better shape than the previous year; we are 'in the black', despite starting the year with a deficit budget. Diocesan remittances have increased dramatically since last year; a sign that parishes are doing well, since remittances are based on a percentage.

The top four operating expenses, as a percentage of total income are:

- a) 34% for support of the Archdiocese,
- b) 26% for salaries and benefits,
- c) 9% for Missions.
- d) 7% Travel

Mka. Theodora highlighted the "2022 parishioner support of parish operations" report in delegate book 3. This is a report of per capita parishioner support for each parish in the reported year.

The Internal Audit was completed just prior to the council and letter confirming its results to be posted on Diocesan website.

Mka. Theodora then spoke on clergy taxes (recommended Clergy Advantage in Loveland, CO). She warned that investigations of non-profits by State Attorney's General have increased. She recommended purchasing Board Insurance, as well as keeping detailed and secured parish council meeting minutes, especially the structure of clergy compensation package, clear Bylaws, clear policies on restricted funds, and the webinar "Safeguarding Your Church's Finances." The IRS is focusing on misdirected 1099 forms. She then entertained a few questions from the floor.

Diocesan Budget - Dorothy Nowik, Financial Committee Chair,

The Financial Committee for 2024 will continue to consist of Archpriest John Dresko, Archpriest Matthew Tate, and Dorothy Nowik. Reports are available on the website. Each year the Finance Committee develops a proposed budget based on previous years' performance.

MOTION to approve the Budget by Priest Stephen Osburn

SECOND by Mr. David Lane

PASSED

Nomination Committee Report - Archpriest Matthew Tate

Every year we have elections for Diocesan Council and Auditors. Nominations may be submitted to the committee throughout the course of the year. For nominations from the floor, the candidate must first be proposed to the Diocesan Hierarchy. There are no nominations from the floor this year.

Nominees presented:

INTERNAL AUDITORS (3)

Deacon Vyacheslav Adams

Ms. Tiffany Gantus

Ms. Maha Adranly

DIOCESAN COUNCIL

Clergy (6 Clergy Delegates - 2 up for election): Priest Peter Runyon, Priest Daniel Lattier

Lay (6 Lay Delegates - 2 up for election): Matushka Elizabeth Powell, Ms. Katie Huff

Voting for these nominations will take place in Session 3.

Bylaw Revisions – Mr. David Lane

Mr. David L. presented the proposed Bylaws Revisions as presented in the Delegate Book and asked for any questions or comments.

Amendment 1 (requiring 80% of the vote)

MOTION by Fr. Matthew Tate to accept the 1ST Amendment to the Bylaws.

SECOND Archpriest Andrew Cuneo **ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY**

Amendment 2

MOTION by Mr. David Lane to accept the 2nd Amendment to the Bylaws.

SECOND by Priest Michael Rozdilski **ADOPTED UNANIMOUSLY**

Metropolitan Council - Archpriest Matthew and Mr. David Lane (*full report available on the website*)

Mr. David Lane reports that the Metropolitan Council working together with the Pension Board to strengthen Pension Plan. There is unanimous agreement on the Metropolitan Council that there is good work being done and cooperation has resolved many of the questions that arose at last AAC

Fr. Matthew T. reported that most of the difficulties between the Metropolitan Council and the Pension Board have been resolved. He emphasized that the Pension Plan is not a simple thing, so using in-depth information and working closely together resulted in a better perspective on how it works and how to take care of it. Currently, the Pension Plan impacts over 300 retired priests and widowed priest-wives.

Pension Plan - Archpriest John Dresko and Archpriest Matthew Tate.

Archpriest John D. joined the pension board last year, and found it amazing to see the incredible amount of complex work needed to run a defined benefit plan. But he also said how important and blessed we are to have a Defined Benefit Plan, as opposed to most plans that shift the risk from the corporation to the person. The Pension Plan and benefits are secure. We have never a missed payment, through a stock crash, through COVID, etc. His Eminence was thanked for his unwavering support of the plan. Our Diocese is 100 percent compliant. Working hard to overcome past struggles between Metropolitan Council and Pension Board.

Fr. Matthew T. commented on the past struggle between the boards, noting it was not any one person's fault. The Pension Board felt defensive and the MC could have communicated better. He also reminded everyone that mandated compliance means no exceptions! He then invited Mr. David L. to comment on his experience serving as the Metropolitan Council liaison to the Pension Board. He reported that in his opinion the distrust between the two boards has been much mitigated, to the benefit of the Pension Plan.

Fr. Steven O. asked a question about the recent 2% increase in contributions by parishes. Archpriest Matthew T. explained: income to cover cost, so to not touch the 'nest egg' that is growing at 6.9%, and pension stays healthy. Will need to be higher over time. Defined Plan is 'living thing', not a static contribution. So we don't have to touch our principal. The Metropolitan Council has added

\$9,000 per month towards administrative expenses of the Pension Plan to its budget. It is normal for the sponsor of a plan to pay these expenses, which has never been done by the OCA.

Church Relations – Archpriest Alexander Rentel reports on his work:

It is the OCA Policy to maintain communion with all canonical Orthodox Churches throughout the world. (We are not in a relationship with the uncanonical OCU Church in Ukraine, headed by Met. Epiphany)

Participated in central committee of World Council of Churches (WCC). One place where Orthodox Churches *not* in communion can dialogue with each other.

Traveled to Patriarchate of Constantinople to discuss matters of common concern.

Went with Archpriest Nazari Polataiko to Ukraine to meet with Metropolitan Onuphry. Went first to Romania and then on to Kyiv.

Metropolitan Onuphry gifted a Panagia to His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin in appreciation for his great friendship. (Fr. Alexander R. presented it in front of the assembly).

Fr. Alexander discussed other matters of interest related to worldwide Orthodox Churches.

He then entertained questions from the floor.

PLENARY SESSION 1 - Ended @ 11:53am

After lunch, His Grace, Bishop Alexei addressed the assembly with a spiritual talk regarding the Christian Life. It was followed by break-out Table Discussions.

PLENARY SESSION 2 - Began @ 1:45pm

Credentials:

2 Hierarchs

69 Clergy

25 Lay Delegates

8 Observers

104 Total Participants

Charities - Archpriest Russell Lawrence

Fr. Lawrence R. encouraged the delegates to read his comprehensive report in Delegate Book 3.

There were three direct disbursements from the charity department: for Maui Fire Relief, Syro-Turkish earthquake relief, and to the Shipley family. Thanked the diocese for its longtime support of the Gobezie-Goshu Home charity. Now, due to the ongoing conflict there, the transfer of funds has not been possible. When this is resolved, support will resume. Tsige's nephew, Abraham Teklu, is the new director.

For many years the DOW has supported two charities that are no longer possible to support, as transfers to Russia and Ethiopia have become impossible. The annual Lenten appeal raised \$17,000 for the Diocese of Alaska. (noted that \$6,000 as also given to Mexico). This year the Lenten Appeal will be directed to Diocese of Mexico

Fr. Lawrence R. recounted how the Gobezie-Goshu arose out of the Santa Maria parish. Over 50,000 children went through the school, and thousands were supported on a stipend for living expenses. Tsige, who was the inspiration, moved to Ethiopia to live her life in service there until her repose.

The assembly sang 'Memory Eternal' for the soul of the departed handmaid, Tsige Mariam.

Monastic Life – Hieromonk Raphael

Fr. Raphael presented a video on the monastery of St. Macarius of Egypt (with two locations in Southern

California and Arizona) and gave an update on St. John the Baptist Monastery in Phoenix.. With 12 monastics, the monastery is available for spiritual retreats.

Deanery Highlights (for full reports see the Delegate Handbook)

- **Rocky Mountain** - Priest Moses Hibbard, St. Nicholas of St. Canaan, Billings, MT on behalf of Dean, Archpriest Anthony Karbo.
Archpriest Anthony Karbo has been visited by a number of priests at his home. His illness is progressing. Requests to remember him, Mka Mary, and all his family in your prayers
- **Desert Deanery** – Archpriest Michael, St. John of Damascus, Poway, CA
In his first year as dean, he is enjoying getting to know the other 3 parishes and 3 monasteries in his deanery. Three of these parishes have transitioned from rectors who served them for many years. Highlights: a) getting together today to talk about their needs and strengths, b) working on common projects, c) re-activating a Youth Camp, and Bright Week Liturgies together.
- **Pacific Southwest** – Archpriest Lawrence Rusell, Annunciation, Santa Maria, CA
Three parishes and one monastery. Highlighted his being their 30 years; will consecrate the Temple
- **Pacific Northwest** – Archpriest Stephen Soot, St Anne, Corvallis, OR
Survey was done for prospects for clergy amongst the many single males.
- **Mission Deanery** – Archpriest Matthew Tate, Annunciation, Milwaukie, OR
Missions focus on Building: Bend, OR has a new building being renovated, Carlsbad land is being acquired, Milwaukie is completing expansion, so will host next year's Assembly. We need to pray for the mission priests, who are remote and do not have the of fellowship of brother clergy. They are sacrificing - financially and family. Noted that many of the new clergy come out of our missions.
- **Pacific Central** - Archpriest Lawrence Margitich, St. Seraphim of Sarov, Santa Rosa, CA
We are blessed with the proximity of our archbishop, as well as the DOW Cathedral. One highlight is the pilgrimage to Fort Ross, where we celebrate the Divine Liturgy and picnic on 4th of July. Also blessed with the nearby Kazan Skete, Santa Rosa, and Holy Assumption in Calistoga. Next door, a plot from an original founder of the parish has been purchased by the Home of Mercy, the oldest charity in the Diocese of the West (with financial assistance from the DOW), after the house went through a total renovation. Planning is underway on how it can be used for future clergy and clergy widow retirement housing.

Clergy Wives Advisory Group - Matushka Elizabeth Powell

The Clergy Wives Advisory Group advises the Department of Pastoral Life, about needs of clergy wives. A few highlights:

Article in winter edition of newsletter written by (newly departed) Matushka Priscilla Shipley. Reached over 500 clergy wives across the country.

Clergy wives in DOW have highest participation rate in quarterly online retreats.

Thanked Matushka Ann Margitich for hosting clergy wives luncheon this afternoon and Hieromonk Innocent (Green) for agreeing to host retreat at St. John Monastery in Manton, CA.

Retired Clergy - Archpriest David Lowell

Archpriest Ian McKinnon and Archpriest Nicholas Kime have worked with him and organized various online Zoom meetings. The fellowship serves 'both sides' of retirement – those entering retirement age, and those who are already retired. A topic that has been used is the identity crisis that someone who has retired more than a year may go through. Some gatherings will have a large audience of interest, others are small and targeted, but simply keep watch for things that may interest you.

Youth, Camps, and Education. Archpriest Michael Anderson.

Working with kids is a calling, a gift, a commandment from God. They need to see the faith in action, from those around them. Camps in the Diocese of the West have been one of the most consistent camping ministries in the OCA—one is more than 50 years. Noted was the work that people put in is extreme. Urges us to look beyond a date, and things, but give thanks to God for those who spend countless hours. Also, find ways to support them and make their jobs easier.

OCCIF - Archpriest John Dresko

Fr. John D. is now retired from parish work, while working with OCCIF. Fr. John D. showed a promotional video from the Orthodox Church Capital Improvement Fund (OCCIF)

PLENARY SESSION 2 - Ended @ 5:16 pm

At the Diocesan Assembly Banquet that evening, the delegates heard addresses from His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin, His Grace, Bishop Alexei, and Archpriest Alexander Rentel.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26TH

PLENARY SESSION 3 - Began @ 11:05 pm

Elections – Archpriest Matthew Tate

Audit Committee: Deacon Vyacheslav Adams, Tiffany Gantus, Maha Adranly

Nominations Committee moved to accept slate

ELECTED UNANIMOUSLY

Lay Members of Diocesan Council (3-year term): Katie Huff, Matushka Elizabeth Powell

Nominations Committee moved to accept slate

ELECTED UNANIMOUSLY

Clergy Positions (3-year term): Priest Peter Runyon, Priest Daniel Lattier

Nominations Committee moved to accept slate

ELECTED UNANIMOUSLY

Report from Breakout Sessions

Each moderator from yesterday’s breakout sessions gave a synopsis of their conversations.

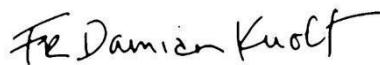
Adjournment

MOTION to adjourn the Assembly by Archpriest Lawrence, Margitich

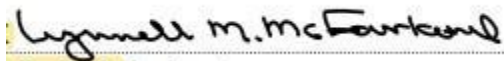
PASSED

Archbishop BENJAMIN adjourned the meeting at 11:33 am with a closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted by,



Archpriest Damian Kuolt, Diocesan Council Secretary



Lynnell McFarland, Secretariat



Priest Andrew Smith, Secretariat