

# DIOCESAN COUNCIL MINUTES

## DIOCESE OF THE WEST

December 11, 2024

**His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN** convened a meeting of the Diocesan Council at Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral, Los Angeles, CA, with an opening prayer at 9:35am on Wednesday, December 11, 2024

**DIOCESAN COUNCIL MEMBERS AND GUESTS PRESENT** Archbishop Benjamin, Archpriest Kirill Sokolov, Archpriest Matthew Tate, Archpriest Lawrence Russell, Archpriest Lawrence Margitich, Archpriest Stephen Soot, Archpriest Andreas Blom, Archpriest Andrew Cuneo, Priest Edward Henderson, Priest Andrew Smith, Priest Peter Runyon, Priest Daniel Lattier, Matushka Theodora Blom, David Lane, Catherine Mabus, Katie Huff. **Observers:** Archpriest David Lowell, Archpriest Nazari Polataiko, Priest Vitaly Permiakov, Sdn. Leonid Bulannikov, Brittany Yeager.

**JOINING VIA ZOOM:** Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Archpriest Barnabas Powell, Archpriest David Morrison, Matushka Elizabeth Powell.

**MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (AND ASSEMBLY 2024 MINUTES)** – Accepted as distributed.

**ARCHBISHOP'S REMARKS** The Holy Synod accepted His Eminence's letter of resignation effective the second day of the All American Council in Phoenix, 2025. He is already moved into Santa Rosa and thanks all those who made efforts to ready that space for him. He welcomes Priest Vitaly Permiakov to the meeting and expresses his hope that he will be nominated to be the new bishop. His Eminence is endeavoring to visit as many parishes as possible before his retirement. He will be traveling to the Diocese of Mexico in January. Beyond that, he is looking forward to retirement.

**CHANCELLOR'S REMARKS** Diocesan Chancellor Archpriest Kirill Sokolov reminded the council that there are some open parishes in the Diocese. They are: Calhan, CO (in January), Hesperia, CA, Littleton, CO (next Summer), Port Townsend, WA, and Sonora, CA. Littleton, Port Townsend, and Sonora all have candidates to fill the vacancies. Both Calhan and Hesperia are somewhat challenging to fill due to their remote locations, although both will be served by supply priests while vacant. There are a few things on the agenda that will take some extra time: we have a chance to have a conversation with Fr. Vitaly, with the intent of getting to know him better. We will also have a chance to discuss honoring His Eminence as he retires as well as setting up the nominations process and other events related to that. Additionally, Archpriest Nazari Polataiko will present a slide show related to the LA Cathedral's petition for funds to reimburse the parish for costs incurred renovating the reposed Bishop Tikhon's apartment. The prayer and hope is for the meeting to close around 2pm. In exciting news, the extraordinary priestly formation cohort (Thriving Parishes Project -- TPP) has been blessed by the Holy Synod.

**TREASURER'S REPORT** Matushka Theodora distributed her report electronically in advance of the meeting. To date, we have a \$93,000 surplus. The Diocese is being assessed a \$48,000 tax to help fund the AAC, which is about \$10,000 over what we have budgeted. Future budgets will have to reflect this new calculation (ratcheting up to about \$16,000 per year). The new treasurer of the Diocese of the Midwest is Sdn. Dimitri Pletz, previously of the West. Matushka Theodora has begun liaising with him and they have established a good working relationship. She would like to begin

requesting internal audit reports from parishes. Matushka has compiled a checklist of what an audit is, what it consists of. Internal audits should be the norm and are a good tool to make sure best practices are being followed. She also commented on a recent question that has come up in multiple instances regarding restricted income and donating money to individual parishioners. The Diocesan Council asked Matushka Theodora to craft a communique on these questions, to be distributed to rectors and parish treasurers.

**MOTION:** David Lane moved that all parishes shall file internal audit reports to the Diocesan Treasurer within 30 days of the annual meeting.

**SECOND:** ARCHPRIEST STEPHEN SOOT **PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

*[see Financial Reports posted on DOW website]*

**REPORT OF FINANCE COMMITTEE** No report.

**DEANS/DEANERIES UPDATES:**

- **Archpriest Kirill Sokolov– Missionary District:** The annual Mission Deanery Retreat will be held February 11-13, 2025 in Milwaukie, OR.
- **Archpriest Andreas Blom - Rocky Mountain Deanery:** The consecration of St. John Church in Colorado Springs is scheduled for February 9, 2025.

**INTERVIEW WITH PRIEST VITALY PERMIAKOV, Ph.D.** Fr. Vitaly greeted the Council and expressed his gratitude and joy for being here. He then entertained questions from Diocesan Council Members for about sixty minutes.

**[10 Minute Recess]**

**[Archbishop Benjamin and Fr. Vitaly not present for this portion]**

**RETIREMENT FESTIVITIES** Archbishop Benjamin's retirement date is set for the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the AAC. His Eminence will welcome everyone to the Council. There is a lunch slot on that 2<sup>nd</sup> day (Tuesday) to have a retirement banquet for His Eminence. There will be an opportunity to sell tickets for those who would like to attend. The council needs to form a committee to organize this luncheon from among Diocesan Council members. The Pacific Central Deanery is planning a local event honoring Vladyka after Pascha. His Eminence is also making a point of visiting parishes one last time in order to say goodbye (and for local communities to say their goodbyes and thanks). Catherine Mabus, Matushka Theodora Blom, and Matushka Elizabeth Powell volunteered to be on the committee.

**NOMINATION PROCESS FOR A BISHOP** On Wednesday of the AAC, we have an opportunity to hold a nominating assembly. If we elect a nominee, the Synod has an opportunity to elect that nominee the same day. If the candidate is already a bishop, then we need to plan an installation. If not, then both a consecration and installation will need to be planned. A possible date for this event would be August 16. Another possible date would be October 11, though it seems like expediency is preferable.

Then, on the Friday of the AAC, we will have our 2025 Diocesan Assembly from approximately 1 pm to 4 pm.

For the consecration/installation banquet, we will explore possible venues in San Francisco that can host up to 300 attendees.

Fr. Kirill reports that His Eminence appointed the Chancellor's Advisory Committee to serve as the nominating sub-committee. Yesterday, that committee discussed five other names and decided to submit two of those names for additional consideration by the Metropolitan and Holy Synod.

**HOLY VIRGIN MARY CATHEDRAL** The cathedral parish has circulated a petition requesting diocesan funding to assist with repairs of the apartment used by Bishop Tikhon during his retirement. Matushka Theodora reports that, aside from 2018, she has never received remittances or financial reconciliation statements from the parish. All other emails to the rector and treasurer have gone unanswered. They recently submitted a reconciliation form that has some discrepancies when compared with financial statements. The thought is that, before we entertain the request of reimbursement, we need to perform an internal audit to determine the actual financial situation of the parish. We want to establish a sub-committee under New Business of Mka. Theodora, Pacific Southwest Dean Archpriest Lawrence Russell, and one other person for this audit.

**REQUEST FOR RAISE OF SDN. LEO'S COMPENSATION** Subdeacon Leo Bulannikov has been speaking with various diocesan entities about his dissatisfaction with his compensation. The position was created as a live-in position, with the value of housing being factored into the total compensation package. He currently makes \$2,200 per month plus housing.

**MOTION:** Fr. Lawrence Russell moved to offer Sdn. Leo Bulannikov a ten percent raise.

**SECOND:** ARCHPRIEST MATTHEW TATE **PASSED (1 OPPOSED, 1 ABSTENTION)**

Leo's employment will end effective the end of the week His Eminence leaves office.

**HOLY TRINITY/DUBOCE RECTORY AGREEMENT** Fr. Matthew introduced letter from the Holy Trinity Cathedral parish council requesting that the Cathedral Dean housing revert to 1520 Green St. and the Diocesan Hierarch residence be moved to 720 Duboce Ave. Hierarch housing used to be at 2040 Anza St. (Christ the Saviour Church), but Bishop Tikhon gave up that right, preferring to reside in Los Angeles. His Eminence moved into the cathedral dean's residence from Raphael House after he was elevated to diocesan hierarch. The council discussed the pros and cons of the proposal, and came to the consensus (without a motion at this time) that it was in agreement with the request.

**LUNCH RECESS 12:28 PM**

**12:45 SESSION RESUMES**

**SLIDESHOW FROM ARCHPRIEST NAZARI POLATAIKO AND CORNEL DASCALU ON REPOSED BISHOP TIKHON'S RESIDENCE** Fr. Matthew Tate asked to find out more about parish financial resources before agreeing to remit funds for the rebuild. Fr. Matthew asked His Eminence to bless Mka Theodora, Fr. Lawrence Russell, and one other person to investigate. His Eminence so blessed.

**MOTION:** Archpriest Matthew Tate moved to table the question of issuing funds to Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral until after the internal audit has been completed and reported on.

**SECOND:** DAVID LANE **PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**YOUTH - TABLED**

**LEGAL COMMITTEE** David Lane reports that currently there are no legal matters to discuss.

**COMPLIANCE/BACKGROUND CHECKS - TABLED**

**CLERGY WIVES FELLOWSHIP -TABLED**

**RETIRED CLERGY FELLOWSHIP** Fr. David Lowell reported that the fellowship continues its good work.

**METROPOLITAN COUNCIL / PENSION PLAN** There have been no meetings since the Assembly.

**CHARITIES** Archpriest Lawrence Russell had nothing new to report.

**THRIVING PARISHES PROJECT/GRANT** Priest Andrew Smith reported that parish visits have picked up in earnest. By the end of February 2025, half of the twenty participating parishes will have had their in-person retreat. He expressed interest in tracking how the learning modules will be received by the parishes.

**HOME OF MERCY – NO UPDATE**

**CENTENNIAL FORT ROSS OCT 4, 2025** The OCA (DOW) and ROCOR committees are meeting.

**OTHER OLD BUSINESS - NONE**

**NEW BUSINESS**

- Leo Bulannikov tenders resignation effective January 1.
- **LAKE HAVASU** – Fr. Matthew introduced the question of what to do with the Lake Havasu Property. A Greek Mission is interested in the property. It is appraised at around \$360,000, possibly as high as \$450,000. The Council needs to decide how to proceed. Metropolitan Gerasimos (GOA) has asked that it be donated to the GOA. The council decided to get a more complete appraisal done and then it would approach the Metropolis of San Francisco (GOA) with a significant discounted offer. Further discussion was tabled until a Zoom meeting in January. The St. Peter the Aleut Board was tasked to get the final appraisal number (CMA) by March 1, 2025.
- **HOLY TRINITY/DUBOCE QUESTION** Fr. Matthew updated the Archbishop with the Holy Trinity Parish Council’s request. His Eminence stated that the proposed solution does make the situation cleaner administratively.

**MOTION:** David Lane moved to accept the proposal outlined in the letter, whereby the Holy Trinity Cathedral Dean’s residence will be re-established at 1520 Green St. and the Diocesan Hierarch residence will move to 720 Duboce Ave.

**SECOND:** ARCHPRIEST ANDREW CUNEO **PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (CHANCELLOR RECUSED HIMSELF. THE DIOCESAN SECRETARY CALLED THE QUESTION).**

**NEXT MEETINGS** - None planned.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN** by Archpriest Kirill Sokolov

Archbishop BENJAMIN led the council in prayer and the meeting adjourned at 1:40 pm PST.

Submitted by:

*Priest Andrew Smith*

Priest Andrew Smith, Diocesan Council Secretary