

Minutes: Archdiocesan Council, Sep. 21, 2013

The Archdiocesan Council meeting was held on Sep. 21, 2013 at St. Mark, Bethesda. Attendance was excellent, with 9 of 10 parishes/missions represented. There were a total of 17 attendees: His Beatitude, 9 parish/mission rectors, and 7 parish council presidents or representatives – thus easily meeting the quorum requirements. (See appendix for a list of the attendees.)

The meeting began with a very nice lunch provided by St. Mark (our thanks for their hospitality) and informal lunchtime conversations. It then moved on to some of the main items of our diocesan life: opening comments by His Beatitude, a review of the agenda for the upcoming Archdiocesan Assembly, and financial discussions. These are summarized below.

His Beatitude's Comments: His Beatitude opened by thanking us for the prayers for his grandmother, who had recently fallen asleep. He then moved on to expressing his commitment to being actively involved in the life of his archdiocese:

- Seeking to visit each parish about two times per year
- Instituting informal gatherings with the clergy brotherhood every two months
- Meeting with the diocesan officers monthly.

After 4+ years as Archdiocesan Chancellor, Fr. Gregory has asked to be replaced in that position. Metropolitan Tikhon said he would seek a replacement by the upcoming Assembly (Nov. 15-16) and asked the clergy to provide him with any suggestions. Since the treasurer (Michael Hydock) and the secretary (Fr. John Vitko) were just appointed to their positions in 2012, per our by-laws they will continue in those positions – though Michael Hydock would welcome someone either taking over from him or assisting him.

Metropolitan Tikhon also said that he would like us to implement more formal administrative procedures – not for the sake of trying to control things but from the perspective of having a better understanding of what the parishes are facing. To that end, he would like each parish to provide:

- A copy of their By-Laws
- Annual census numbers, i.e. the number of members in that parish
- Minutes from the parish Annual Meeting
- The parish's Annual Budget report
- Report on the status of their compliance with the OCA Policies, Standards, and Procedures on Sexual Misconduct
- Summary of the continuing education received by the parish clergy for that year

Fr. Ted noted that the need to 'self report' one's continuing education to the OCA Department of Continuing Education had not been made clear. Fr. John offered to resend a notification to that effect.

Metropolitan Tikhon also discussed a ‘clergy health’ questionnaire that he would like to circulate amongst the clergy and have them anonymously respond to it. The questionnaire reflects His Beatitude’s genuine concern for the spiritual, emotional, and physical health of his clergy and is patterned after a similar questionnaire that he developed with the help of a mental health professional and used in the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania. It has questions like: do you have a regular Father Confessor? how often do you go to personal confession? do you have annual health exams? how much time do you spend with your wife and children? do you feel you suffer consistently from burn-out. The idea was that if he found that burn-out, for example, was an issue for a number of clergy, we could organize some sort of training/help around it. This idea seemed to be favorably received.

His Beatitude also asked us to think about whether we might want to pursue a parish growth/revitalization program.

Agenda for the Annual Assembly: the 2013 Archdiocesan Assembly will be held on Nov. 15-16 at St. Matthew Orthodox Church in Columbia, MD. The first day is a “Clergy Retreat” and is for clergy only – all clergy, whether delegates or not – and involves continuing education training on issues related to sexual misconduct. The second day is the ‘normal’ Archdiocesan Assembly and is open for all delegates and observers. A draft agenda was presented for both days and was approved with only one small change (the addition of a FOCA discussion to the Assembly agenda).

Financial Discussions: the treasurer, Michael Hydock, discussed several major items:

September meeting of parish treasurers: this meeting discussed alternate ways of financing the Archdiocese. No conclusions were reached, but it was noted that all parishes were ‘stretched thin’ (albeit for different reasons) and the suggestion was made to consider a Diocesan Benefactors Fund patterned after that in NY/NJ.

2013 YTD Budget: we are incurring an approximately \$2100 per month deficit as the result of St. Nicholas Cathedral and Christ the Savior mission not paying their assessments. This has significantly depleted our reserves.

Proposed Budget and Assessment for 2014: Michael presented 6 different budget scenarios for 2014 and several additional ones were brought up during the Council discussions. After extensive discussion, the Council decided to recommend a modified scenario as the baseline. Key features of this scenario are:

- The mission stipends are increased from its 2013 level of \$6,000 per mission to a 2014 level of \$7,000.
- The Central Assessment is reduced to \$92/yr
- St. Nicholas’ request to waive its assessments for 3 years (2014-2016) is denied. However, the Archdiocese will reimburse St. Nicholas for the \$38,185 in as yet unreimbursed expenses it incurred for Metropolitan Jonah. After taking credit for the \$24,731 that St. Nicholas owes the

Archdiocese for its 2013 assessments, this leaves an additional balance due to St. Nicholas of \$13,434. This remaining balance will be paid out equally over 3 years (2014, 2015, 2016).

- Christ the Savior's request to waive its assessment for through Jun 2014, then resume paying assessments in July 2014 and to no longer receive a mission stipend after December 2014 is approved.
- The resulting diocesan operating budget, exclusive of central assessments, is \$54,200 (\$24,000 in mission stipends; \$22,660 in episcopal expenses; \$7,000 in administrative costs; and \$500 in outreach). It will be funded by a percentage assessment on each parish of approximately 2.6-2.7% of their gross income.

Motion 1 (Vitko/ Dzambasow): Move that the baseline 2014 budget presented to the Archdiocesan Council be the one with the \$7,000 per mission stipend and the reimbursement of the remaining St. Nicholas expenses (\$13,434) over a 3 year period (2014-2016). Unanimously approved.

The Council was also strongly desirous of proposing the establishment of a Diocesan Benefactors Fund in 2014 but noted that we had to be clearer on how it would be used (e.g. to offset mission assessments? to reduce parish assessments? to provide funds to the seminaries? to fund other programs and outreach?...). Fr. John Parsells was asked to develop a one page proposal to present at the Assembly. Council members were encouraged to send Fr. John any ideas they may have on this – but they must be received by Oct. 21 to be considered.

Legal Matters: a legal suit has been filed by a former employee of St. Matthew House against the Archdiocese, St. Matthew Parish, St. Matthew House, and a number of named individuals. No-one has been served yet, so the status is uncertain. This has been reported to our insurance company (GuideOne) and an attorney has been assigned to it and has had an initial meeting with the Archdiocesan Officers.

Diocesan Presence: many of our parishioners and parishes do not understand the role of the Archdiocese and we are not 'visible' to them. We need to increase the Archdiocesan presence at the parish level. One suggestion was more frequent visits by diocesan officers – not just during times of trouble. A second suggestion was to revive the Archdiocesan quarterly publication (Cathedra) – which ceased when the diocese had been merged in that of NY/NJ. Fr. Dennis Buck offered his help with reviving the publication.

Respectfully submitted:

Fr. John Vitko

APPENDIX: Attendees at the Sep. 21, 2013 Archdiocesan Council meeting:

Parish	Council Member
	Metropolitan Tikhon
All Saints of N. America	Fr. Michael Koblosh
Christ the Savior	Fr. John Parsells
Holy Archangels	Fr. Robert Miclean Noel Brockett
St. Andrew	Fr. Ted Boback Yuriy Dzambasow
St. Catherine	Fr. Dennis Buck
St. Mark	Fr. Gregory Safchuk Gene Jacobsen Michael Hydock (Treasurer)
St. Matthew	Fr. Constantine White Lisa Mikhalevsky
St. Nicholas	Fr. George Kokhno Claire Nobles
St. Luke	Fr. John Vitko Val Maksimovic