

Report of John Kozey, Lay Delegate to the Metropolitan Council

PREFACE

Since being elected to the Metropolitan Council in October 2008 as the lay delegate to the then-Diocese of Washington, New York and New Jersey I have been blessed to attend Council meetings in an atmosphere of openness that has not been heard of in recent times. Our Metropolitan, Synod of Bishops and Metropolitan Council are on a journey together in learning how we may all work more effectively with one another and discovering what each entity may be able to contribute toward the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His Orthodox Church in America. But much work remains.

INTRODUCTION

The most recent meeting of the Metropolitan Council (MC) was held September 20-23, 2009 and the preliminary drafting of the Minutes is now in process but unavailable as of this date. (After the MC members have an opportunity to review the draft, the Draft Minutes of the 2010 Fall Metropolitan Council Meeting should be posted on the OCA website. At the Spring 2011 Metropolitan Council Meeting, the draft minutes will be presented and possibly adjusted prior to a vote by the MC prior to the posting as the final and/or official report. Anyone interested in past postings of drafted or final Minutes of prior MC meetings should go to the OCA website at www.oca.org and click on the Search tab at the top of the main page.)

Please forgive the lack of detail in this report, which for lack of verification between the completion of the Fall Meeting and deadline for this report, which is weeks prior to the draft of the Minutes. It is preferable to omit details rather than guess.

FALL 2010 METROPOLITAN COUNCIL INTRODUCTION

Monday evening September 20 began the MC Retreat at Our Lady of Kazan Church in nearby Seacliff, New York, led by Fr. Thomas Hopko, Dean Emeritus of St. Vladimir's Seminary. The Retreat continued Tuesday until dinner, after which the business portion of the Fall Session commenced. Hierarchs in attendance for much of the session included Metropolitan JONAH (MJ), Bishop Tikhon, Bishop Benjamin and Bishop Melchisedek.

Following an introduction and Agenda discussion by OCA Secretary Fr. Eric Tosi and Approval the Spring 2010 session of the MC minutes by Fr. Alexander Garklovs, MJ made his opening remarks. Much of the focus was regarding the planned Great and Holy Council and the OCA's desire of "a seat at the table" and how that can happen. MJ felt that to clarify our position on Autocephaly, as it is not defined per se, anywhere as it pertains to the Ecumenical Patriarch or the Greek churches. Fr. Hopko expressed a view that the OCA does not need to take any action at this point, as the outcome will most likely be determined in conjunction with other US Orthodox jurisdictions. This issue remains intensely discussed and will come up again in the External Affairs portion of this report and ongoing news may be viewed in Orthodox news and blog sites, including www.orthodoxnews.org and www.oceanews.org. Discussions with the dioceses on the Strategic Plan are ongoing and factor into the ultimate end position.

Fr. Garklovs as OCA Chancellor and Fr. Tosi as OCA Secretary presented their reports. Topics included the establishment of an Office of Clergy Health, and also discussion of St. Herman Theological Seminary's seriously underfunded finances. Also, Protodeacon Joseph Matusiak was introduced as a part-time addition to Administrative Support in addition to his role in Alumni Relations at St. Vladimir's Seminary.

VARIOUS COMMITTEE REPORTS

To save time and to work more effectively all Committee reports were distributed in advance of the meeting date for review by each MC member. Every MC member is required to serve on at least one Committee. MC Committees reporting here are: Charity, Council Development, Crisis Management, Ethics, Human Resources, Internal Governance and Strategic Planning. Fr. John Vitko spoke well on the Strategic Plan and the process of polling each diocese for feedback through the Diocesan Assembly and other meetings.

LEGAL COMMITTEE

The Legal Committee went into Executive Session, where minutes are not kept and nor are attendees able to freely discuss business during the session. All relevant legal business regarding various lawsuits in which the OCA is currently and potentially may become involved were reported and discussed.

FINANCE/INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

OCA Treasurer Melanie Ringa reviewed the 2010 Audit Statement along with the OCA's external auditors, Lambrides, Mendler, Lamos, Taylor LLP. This MC member made note of and thanked Mr. Rob Taylor for his assistance in guiding the proper language of a series of letters this member authored in regarding deficiencies and concerns about central Church finances. All those present responded with applause for Mr. Taylor. Afterwards, Fr. Matthew Tate as Committee Chair presented the 2011 budget, which was approved.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky, Director of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations reported extensively on the anticipated Great and Holy Council and the OCA's potential role. Fr. Kishkovsky noted that if the Ecumenical Patriarch considers the OCA as an anomaly, then isn't the status of every jurisdiction in the United States and anomaly? There are no rules at this point for the convening of such a council, and the Greek government stopped funding the Patriarchal Center in Chambesy Switzerland where the Council would presumably take place. More details will be offered at the Diocesan Assembly as news is evolving on an ongoing basis.

One particular area of concern among MC members and attending bishops was the divergence between what Fr. Kishkovsky reported as having heard from his contacts that Metropolitan JONAH discussed with the Russian Orthodox (Patriarchal) Church and Metropolitan himself - a concern among some fellow bishops and members of the MC. As a result, the MC exhorted Metropolitan JONAH to maintain an internal consultative and conciliar approach during these delicate and critical conversations.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Anyone considering himself or herself a candidate as the Lay Representative to the Metropolitan Council of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey should weigh in on the time commitment: 3-4 days each for the Spring and Fall sessions of the MC in addition to any time spent on Committees (Finance Committees included several phone conversations during the business day), as well as the one day a month Diocesan Council meetings and the annual Diocesan Assembly. I stand ready to brief and assist the newly elected delegates in any way possible as they transition into this role.

Finally, I am grateful for the support of the Diocese in electing me to this role in October 2008, and pray that I was able to contribute to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His holy Orthodox Church.

Respectfully submitted,

John Kozey

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September 30, 2010