

***NEW YORK-NEW JERSEY DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY:  
NOVEMBER 11, 2014  
Endicott, NY***

***Fall Session of the Metropolitan Council:  
September 22-25, 2014***

Submitted by Fr. John Shimchick

The Metropolitan Council (MC), as described by Metropolitan Tikhon, represents the “beauty of the Orthodox Church in America.” Its goal is to be a bridge between the Dioceses and the work of the Church: conveying Diocesan concerns to an assembled gathering of the whole Church, but also bringing back a broader sense of the activity of the Church to each Diocese. As defined within the OCA Statutes, it is to be representative and collaborative, within the limits of its competence and subject to the overseeing responsibility of the Holy Synod of Bishops. Both the MC and Holy Synod, it could be said, are also cognizant of their limits and responsibilities in light of the nature of the Church and before God.

So, laity and clergy representatives from each Diocese with those selected by the All-American Council and members of the Lesser Synod of Bishops, chaired by the Metropolitan, gather twice a year to continue the work of the Council between its sessions (OCA Statute, Article V, Section 1). Specifically, here are the MC’s “competences” as listed by the Statute:

1. Implements the decisions of the All-American Council and of the Holy Synod in the areas of its competence;
2. Assists the Metropolitan and the Holy Synod in implementing decisions within the areas of its competence;
3. Establishes the budget for the operations of the Church and examines all financial reports of the Church;
4. Supervises the collection of the assessments and fees established by the All-American Council and determines the allocation of such funds;
5. Organizes plans for obtaining voluntary contributions for the satisfaction of the needs of the Church;
6. Provides for the maintenance of the central administrative bodies of the Church and for the allocation of the general Church funds;
7. Decides on the purchase, sale, or mortgaging of property of the Church, except in cases covered in Article X, Section 8;
8. Maintains an inventory of all properties of the Church;
9. Provides for the establishment and maintenance of institutions of charity and education, as well as for publications for the propagation of the Orthodox Faith;
10. Determines the forms and books necessary for the keeping of records and statistical data by the dioceses, requiring all statistics necessary for reports;
11. Appoints officers and committees on matters within its competence;

12. Initiates, prosecutes, and defends all legal matters affecting the interest of the Church;
13. May receive reports from any department in areas within the competence of the Metropolitan Council.

This Session of the MC took place at the Immaculate Conception Seminary, located close to Syosset, Long Island. It began on Monday September 22 with a Retreat led by the Ukrainian Orthodox priest, Fr. Robert Holet on the topic of “Stewardship,” based on his published Doctor of Ministry thesis, “*Orthodox Christian Stewardship as Sacred Offering.*” The Retreat was helpful and his book is a well-written and excellent resource for parish use. In January, 2015, Fr. Robert will teach a course entitled, “*Stewardship in American Orthodoxy,*” at St. Vladimir’s Seminary, comprising an on-line and a residential component (for more info: <http://www.svots.edu/headlines/seminary-offers-four-hybrid-online-public-courses-january>).

As described by the Statutes, the major function of the MC is to review and support the ongoing work within the Orthodox Church in America. Metropolitan Tikhon set the tone in his Report by reaffirming and describing his personal efforts and commitment to the revitalization of three particular areas:

1. Missions and Evangelization
2. Clergy health
3. The Strengthening of monasteries and seminaries

His Beatitude discussed the involvement of the OCA in the *Assembly of Canonical Bishops of the United States of America*. The aim of the OCA in the *Assembly* is to “present our vision of a unified Orthodox Church in a non-controversial, humble, but persistent way.” The OCA’s Holy Synod issued a Preliminary Response to proposals on canonical restructuring that were discussed at the most recent *Assembly* held in Dallas (September, 2014). This Response can be found on the OCA’s website: <http://oca.org/news/headline-news/oca-holy-synod-issues-preliminary-response-to-canonical-restructuring-propo>

The MC received and reviewed the following reports:

- *Chancellor* —Fr. John Jillions, Chancellor
- *Secretary*—Fr. Eric Tosi, Secretary — who also presented an update on the 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council which will be held next year in Atlanta
- *External Affairs* —Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky
- *Legal* — Judge E.R. Lanier
- *Strategic Plan Committee* —Fr. John Vitko: Fr. John has kept in regular contact with members of the Committee. Acknowledging that the essential features of the *Plan* have for the most part either been incorporated into the functioning life of the OCA, he stated that the Committee will be phased out at the 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council.
- *Human Resources* —Fr. David Garretson

- *Internal Governance* —Fr. Chad Hatfield
- *Treasurer's Report*: Melanie Ringa indicated that the deficit of \$54,791 for 2013 is lower than originally projected. She anticipates a balanced budget in 2014. All major loans (except for a short loan for Metropolitan Tikhon's car) are paid.
- *2015 Budget*—The Budget is balanced. The Assessment has been reduced to \$90.00.
- *Financial Development*—David Yeosock
- *Charity* — Protodeacon Michael Myers.
- *Military Chaplains*—Frs. Theodore Boback & Joseph Gallick
- *OCA Statute Revision* — Fr. Alexander Rentel
- *ORSMA* — Cindy Davis
- *SMPAC* — Dr. Albert Rossi
- *Pension Board*—Fr. Gleb McFatter
- *Liturgical Music*—David Drillock

Though presentations were not made during the MC, we also received Reports from the *Departments of Christian Education, Christian Service and Humanitarian Aid, Continuing Education, Evangelization, Institutional Chaplains, and Youth and Young Adults.*

Jan Van Duyn and I serve on the *Financial Development Committee* which encouraged the establishment this past year of the “*Stewards of the OCA,*” a supplemental funding effort (similar to the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards).

We also serve on the *Work Reorganization Group.* Established in 2012 this Group was charged with the responsibility “to prepare an initial draft on what is the work of the Church and where, centrally or locally, it can be most effectively done.” Having prepared an initial review and summary report in 2013 of “work logs” for the Church Officers, the Group awaited further guidance from the Holy Synod. Recently, we received from Fr. Eric Tosi a massive collection of documents that examines the organization of the OCA's Departments and we anticipate being involved in helping to formulate and promote a discussion of their direction and work. Among the areas to consider again will be how these Departments supplement or overlap the efforts taking place on the Diocesan level.

The MC provides a wonderful opportunity to examine broadly the life of our OCA from the perspective of our Diocese, but within a gathering of representatives from our whole Church and the presence of our hierarchy (the Lesser Synod).

Minutes, reports, a related story of the Fall [Metropolitan Council](http://oca.org/news/headline-news/minutes-reports-of-fall-2014-metropolitan-council-meeting-posted) meeting, held September 22-25, 2014, are available at:

<http://oca.org/news/headline-news/minutes-reports-of-fall-2014-metropolitan-council-meeting-posted>