

**Fall, 2015 Metropolitan Council Meeting  
September 22-24, 2015**

by Fr. John Shimchick  
Diocesan Clergy Representative

***Council Retreat***

Over the past few years the Fall Meeting of the Metropolitan Council has begun with a “Retreat” that takes place on Monday, the day before the Meeting begins. Previous themes have been presented on “*Conflict Resolution*” and “*Stewardship*.” This year Metropolitan Tikhon, desiring to emphasize the value of our Seminaries as resources, asked Dr. Mary Ford from St. Tikhon’s and Fr. John Behr from St. Vladimir’s to speak on themes of their choice. Dr. Ford delivered the morning presentation entitled, “*Whom Shall I Fear? Themes from Revelation,*” and Fr. John spoke about, “*Becoming Human: Passages from the Scriptures and Patristic Tradition.*”

Both of these presentations were excellent and stimulating, especially to the lay representatives who had no or little prior theological training.

***The Meeting***

A thorough summary is available on the OCA website:

<http://oca.org/news/headline-news/metropolitan-council-concludes-fall-session-passes-2016-budget>

Coming as the first Meeting since the All American Council (AAC) there were a number of new members chosen by their Dioceses or the AAC. With this has come an evaluation of the current value of some previous Council Committees. My own work over the past years has focused on an evaluation of both Administrative and Departmental uniqueness and overlap, especially as these related to activities with the Dioceses. Further consideration of these Committees will take place over the next few months and reviewed at the next Meeting.

***The Four Pillars***

In his opening address, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon reflected on the work on the [18th All-American Council](#) and introduced the ongoing work on his “*The Apostolic Work of the Church: Building the House of the Lord in Our Lands,*” which will provide a “guiding framework for the Orthodox Church in America” during the next triennium and beyond. Using the image of the four pillars of the altar table at the consecration of a church, he proposed that the Orthodox Church in America build its apostolic work on the “the foundation, which is Christ,” and the pillars of the **spiritual life, stewardship, evangelism and outreach and external relations.**

We reviewed the entire document over the course of the Meeting and spent considerable time reviewing various aspects, encouraging its focus on the formation of Christ within all of us, especially as it is developed within parish life.

[Read the text of Metropolitan Tikhon's opening address: <http://oca.org/news/oca-news/report-of-his-beatitude-metropolitan-tikhon>].

### ***Stewards of the OCA***

Raymond Boyd made a presentation on the “*Stewards of the OCA*,” which seeks to “expand the Mission of Orthodoxy in America by funding and participating in departmental ministries.” As, the particular areas include new missions, seminarians and other areas very similar to the work of our DDB and similar funds within other Dioceses, Mr. Boyd was encouraged to find ways of identifying the unique areas of support that will supplement the work of the National Church and not conflict or be in competition with those already taking place within the Diocese.

### ***2016 Preliminary Budget***

Melanie Ringa, OCA Treasurer, presented the Preliminary Budget of **\$1,791,974** (2015: Projected Budget: \$1,893,173—Schedule C) based on the information she has received to this point from the Dioceses, as determined by the new funding formula approved at this year's AAC.

Our Diocesan Assessment will be: **\$217,573**. Last year it was **\$288,630** (*See: Assessment-Exhibit C1*).

### ***ORSMA (Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations):*** Cindy Heise

Cindy confirmed that the documentation and training of our parishes in the avoidance of incidents of sexual misconduct continues to be reviewed and streamlined. She stated that all of the necessary information is available on the OCA website:

<http://oca.org/about/sexual-misconduct>

In particular, there is an abbreviated version of the PSPs—“*Policies, Standards, and Procedures of the OCA on Sexual Misconduct*” which makes the review work much easier:

<http://oca.org/PDF/sexual-misconduct/2015-08-abbreviated-ssp.pdf>

She noted that there has been some confusion in properly viewing the online training program, “*Stewards of Children*.” There can be group viewing and training, as she has done within our Diocese. The other option is to individually watch the program on one's

computer. This will enable the company to identify the viewer and release an individual verification certificate.

The OCA will pay for this online training per individual. Here is the information:

**How register for the Stewards of Children online training:**

1. Go to the online training login screen -  
<https://d21.csod.com/selfreg/register.aspx?c=orthodox%20church%20in%20america>
2. Enter all required fields and click “Login”.
3. Once you have completed the registration process, a “Thank you” screen will appear. This screen will also instruct you to disable your pop-up blocker. If you need assistance with this, click the “click here” button for instructions. This can also be found by clicking the following link: <https://host.softworks.ca/Agate3/blocker/disable-blockers.htm>
4. Now you are on your Personalized Training Center Dashboard.

***Conclusion***

A major portion of the last day included a detailed review of the OCA’s involvement in **External Affairs** presented by Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky, which eventually led back to the ongoing work of reviewing Metropolitan Tikhon’s vision on “**The Apostolic Work of the Church** (the Four Pillars).” Fr. Leonid pointed out that though the OCA is small and not acknowledged by parts of the Orthodox world, it still has a “significant and vital role to offer” in conversations and interactions with other Orthodox Christians. Metropolitan Tikhon affirmed that our need is to promote the OCA for “what it is.” This acknowledges that our “vision is not in competition with the foreign Orthodox Churches,” who are particularly concerned with ministry to those from their own ethnic backgrounds. Rather, we want to be understood as “the local Church, reaching out to local Americans.”

His Beatitude was encouraged by the Council to weave this vision of the OCA into the fabric of his vision.