

DRAFT – PENDING APPROVAL

**MINUTES OF THE DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY
OF THE DIOCESE OF NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY,
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA**

November 3, 2021

The clergy and lay delegates of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey met for the annual Diocesan Assembly, on Wednesday, November 3, 2021. The Assembly was convened via videoconference, headquartered at Holy Resurrection Church, Wayne NJ, where Archbishop MICHAEL and the two Assembly Vice-Chairs were located to conduct the meeting.

Prior to the Assembly a Molieben was served by His Eminence. “Memory Eternal” was intoned by Archbishop MICHAEL for all the clergy and matushki of the Diocese who have reposed in the Lord since the last Diocesan Assembly.

His Eminence then gave a brief homily.

V. Rev. DAVID GARRETSON gave some technical instructions regarding the virtual platform.

The proceedings began with the singing of “O Heavenly King” at 11:55 A.M.

Appointments of Assembly Officers

His Eminence, Archbishop MICHAEL, announced the following officers appointed for the 2021 Diocesan Assembly:

V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR (SS. Peter and Paul Church, Jersey City NJ), Clergy Vice-Chair

Mr. JAMES KORNAFEL (SS. Peter and Paul Church, South River NJ), Lay Vice-Chair

Rev. JOHN MORRIS (St. Innocent of Alaska Mission, Oneonta NY), Secretariat (Clergy)

Archdeacon MICHAEL SUVAK (Holy Virgin Protection Cathedral, New York NY),

Secretariat (Lay)

Mrs. TRUDY ELLMORE (Holy Cross Church, Medford NJ), Secretariat (Lay)

V. Rev. STEPHEN EVANINA (Holy Resurrection Church, Wayne NJ), Credentials Monitor

V. Rev. DAVID GARRETSON (SS. Peter and Paul Church, South River NJ),

Credentials Monitor and Ballot Tabulator

Address of the Diocesan Hierarchy

V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR then introduced Archbishop MICHAEL, for whom “Eis Polla” was sung. His Eminence presented his Address to the Assembly.

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Approval of Minutes and Report of Credentials Monitor

After the conclusion of his address Archbishop MICHAEL entertained a motion to accept the Minutes of the 2020 Diocesan Assembly. **V. Rev. JAMES PARSELLS (SS. Peter and Paul Church, Manville NJ) made a motion to accept the 2020 Diocesan Assembly minutes. The motion was seconded by V. Rev. WIACZESLAW KRAWCZUK (Dean, New York City Deanery; Transfiguration Cathedral, Brooklyn NY). Archbishop MICHAEL opened the floor to corrections or questions concerning last year’s Assembly minutes. There were no comments. The motion passed unanimously by virtual hand count.**

V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR thanked the Archbishop for his address. He then invited V. Rev. STEPHEN EVANINA, the Credentials Monitor, to give his report. Father Stephen reported that there were 1 Hierarch, 50 clergy, and 36 lay delegates, 1 retired clergyman, and 6 department heads and guests for a total of 94 participants. It was determined that there were sufficient numbers for a quorum.

OLD BUSINESS

Report of the Treasurer

V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR invited Mrs. JAN VAN DUYN (St. John the Baptist Church, Rochester NY), Diocesan Treasurer, to offer a few words regarding her written report, covering January 1 to Sept 30, 2021 – nine months of the year. She commented that 83% of parish tithes have been sent to the Diocese so far this year. She also commented that expenses are at 79% of budget and income is at 85% of budget. All financials are posted monthly on the Diocesan website. She invited comments or questions.

Kris Puzza (St. Gregory the Theologian Church, Wappingers Falls NY) asked where in the financial reports it is indicated how the shortfalls between income and departmental expenses are made up, and where the updated financial reporting is available.

Mrs. Van Duyn replied that this is where our DDB funds come in to support our programs and cover our shortfalls; transfers from DDB into needed ministries’ funds are documented in the regular financial reports. This is the way our Hierarch helps to manage the shortfalls to support our departments. These reports are available on the Financial Reports section of the website every month, including the 2021 year-to-date financials and the proposed diocesan budget for 2022.

The Report of the Diocesan Auditors and the approval of the 2021 Financials were delayed until after the Invited Speaker’s presentation.

Invited Speaker

His Eminence, Archbishop MICHAEL introduced Archimandrite SERGIUS, Abbot of St. Tikhon’s Monastery, South Canaan PA, commenting that “the strength of the Church is based on the strength of our monasteries.” Archimandrite SERGIUS gave his presentation by video conference.

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Among the wise counsels offered by Abbot SERGIUS were these: “My task is not to solve the problems of the world, but to follow first the Kingdom of the Lord”; “Our inner renewal will bring the outer renewal”; and, “Seek the perfect stillness in the eye of the storm, in the midst of our own daily chaos.”

Report of the Diocesan Auditors

V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR called upon the Diocesan Auditors to make their presentation. Archimandrite JOSEPH (HOFFMAN) (Transfiguration Church, Pearl River NY) of the Diocesan Audit Committee reported that the members of the Committee had completed their audit and they found the finances of the Diocese in order. He then invited any comments or questions. There were none.

V. Rev. LEONID SCHMIDT (Christ the Saviour Church, Paramus NJ) made a motion to accept the Auditors’ Report. The motion was seconded by V. Rev. JASON VANSUCH (St. George Church, Buffalo NY). There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously by virtual hand count.

V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR asked for the approval of 2021 Financials as presented.

V. Rev. MATTHEW SEARFOORCE (Mother of God Church, Mays Landing NJ) made a motion to accept the 2021 Diocesan Financials as presented. The motion was seconded by Mr. PETER PRUZINSKY (Holy Resurrection Church, Wayne NJ). There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously by virtual hand count.

Reports of Diocesan Officers

The following reports had been distributed electronically prior to the Diocesan Assembly; some were presented with highlights by the persons reporting. Mr. JAMES KORNAFEL invited each department head who had submitted the above reports to give highlights from that report and to entertain questions.

- Chancellor’s Report – Mitred Archpriest JOSEPH LICKWAR
- New Jersey Deanery Report – Archpriest GARY JOSEPH BRETON
- New York City Deanery Report – Archpriest WIACZESLAW KRAWCZUK
- New York State Deanery Report – Archpriest ALEXEY KARLGUT

His Eminence, Archbishop MICHAEL expressed his thanks to the Chancellor and Deans for their work with the parishes and clergy of the Diocese.

- Metropolitan Council Report – Archimandrite JOSEPH (HOFFMAN) and JAMES KORNAFEL, Diocesan Representatives to the Metropolitan Council

Regarding the proposal of relocating the OCA archives to either Miami University (Ohio), St. Vladimir’s Seminary, or St. Tikhon’s Seminary, V. Rev. MATTHEW SEARFOORCE and V. Rev. MICHAEL MEERSON (Christ the Savior Church, New York NY) both expressed

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concern over the prospect of housing the OCA's Archives at any non-Orthodox institution. The Metropolitan Council representatives responded that this is a widely expressed concern which the Metropolitan Council is seriously considering in determining the relocation of the Archives.

Regarding the relocation of the OCA Chancery to Washington DC, V. Rev. JAMES PARSELLS asked whether the Metropolitan Council had researched, or is researching, the expense of maintaining the OCA Chancery in the Washington DC area, where costs are high. The Metropolitan Council representatives responded that this issue is being carefully researched; it is the desire of His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON, to reside and have his Chancery within the territory of his Diocese.

Following this discussion, Archbishop MICHAEL stated that while he cannot verify the following, it is his understanding that Miami University of Ohio has withdrawn its request to house the OCA Archives due to the university's own financial constraints.

Reports of the Diocesan Departments and Institutions

- Office of Communications – Archpriest VOLODYMYR ZABLOTSKY (Director of Diocesan Communications; Holy Trinity Church, Yonkers NY)
- Commission on Liturgical Music – Archpriest DANIEL SKVIR (Chapel of the Transfiguration, Princeton NJ), Matushka DOREEN BARTHOLOMEW (Our Lady of Kazan Church, Sea Cliff NY), Ms. CAROL WETMORE (Holy Trinity Church, Randolph NJ).

The Commission members verbally added to their report a request for each parish to respond to their recent appeal for updated contact information for every parish's current choir director.

- Commission on Mission and Evangelism – Archpriest ERIC GEORGE TOSI (Commission Chair; St. Gregory the Theologian Church, Wappingers Falls NY)
- Department of Youth Ministry – Ms. DANIELLE GEEZA, Department Director, was not able to be present. Fr. DAVID COWAN give highlights of her report.
- Department of Christian Education – Matushka TAMARA COWAN, Department Director
- Diocesan Publications, *Jacob's Well* – Presbyter MATTHEW BROWN, Director
- Saint Andrew's Camp – Ms. DARIA YORK, Director, and Matushka TAMARA COWAN, Program Director
- Diocesan Background Check Report – Archpriest LEONID SCHMIDT was asked about Diocesan compliance with the OCA's Policies, Standards and Procedures for the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct. He clarified that his responsibilities in this area are limited to the overseeing of Background Checks for Diocesan clergy and those who work with youth.

Mrs. MARIE GIOKAS (Diocesan Council Member; St. Basil's Church, Watervliet NY) inquired as to the most effective way to discontinue the automated process of running background checks every three years for particular persons who have left their positions. Fr. LEONID SCHMIDT replied that it would be possible to take a survey of the parishes to identify those persons who are

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no longer serving in capacities where they have contact with youth; or priests can write to Fr. Leonid when the persons in those positions change.

Mr. JAMES KORNAFEL asked for a motion to accept the Reports of the Diocesan Officers and Department and Institution Heads. **Mrs. MARIE GIOKAS made a motion to accept the Reports of the Diocesan Officers and Department and Institution Heads as presented. Mr. PHILP BENDA (SS. Peter and Paul Church, Bayonne NJ) seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously by virtual hand count.**

NEW BUSINESS

Adoption of the 2022 Budget

Mrs. JAN VAN DUYN reviewed the proposed budget. Additions to the budget included a three percent (3%) salary increase for His Eminence, Archbishop MICHAEL; funding for a new Administrative Assistant to the Archbishop; and funding for a new Diocesan Evangelism School. She then entertained questions from the floor.

A motion to accept the proposed budget was made by Rev. JOEL BRADY (Holy Apostles Mission, Lansing NY) and was seconded by Rev. AMBROSE INLOW (SS. Peter and Paul Church, Syracuse NY). The motion passed unanimously.

Other New Business

Following the reading of a letter from Archimandrite SERGIUS regarding the building needs of St. Tikhon's Monastery, Archbishop MICHAEL announced that there will be a Diocesan-wide collection to raise funds for a needed new building at Saint Tikhon's Monastery. The Diocesan Council has approved this appeal. His Eminence added that anyone who sends in a prayer request to St. Tikhon's Monastery is prayed for every day. This appeal is worthy of our support.

Archbishop MICHAEL asked for a motion to accept the 2022 Diocesan Charity Appeal as presented. **Rev. VASIL DUBEE (SS. Peter and Paul Church, East Herkimer NY) moved to accept the 2022 Diocesan Charity Appeal. The motion was seconded by Rev. MICHAEL PEJOVIC (Holy Spirit Church, Wantage NJ). There was no discussion. The motion was unanimously approved by virtual hand count.**

Archbishop MICHAEL read a letter from Matushka MARY BULETZA BRETON, a Trustee of the OCA Pension Plan (and Lay Delegate from Annunciation Church, Brick NJ). His Eminence commented that there is no appearance of mishandling of finances or any problems with the procedures of the Pension Program and commended the Pension Board for its handling of the \$30 million in assets. He said that ours is the most solid pension program of any American Orthodox jurisdiction at this time.

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V. Rev. DAVID GARRETSON made a motion to commend the Trustees of the Pension Plan, thank them for their service, and continue to support the concept of a defined benefits plan for OCA clergy. Mrs. JAN VAN DUYN seconded the motion. Father DAVID GARRETSON and Matushka MARY BULETZA BRETON made additional comments affirming the intent of the motion. The motion passed unanimously by virtual hand count.

There was no new business from the floor.

Appointments by the Archbishop

Archbishop MICHAEL reappointed V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR as Chancellor, V. Rev. DAVID COWAN (Personal Secretary to the Archbishop) as Vice-Chancellor, Mrs. JANET VAN DUYN as Diocesan Treasurer, Mrs. STEPHANIE BURK as Assistant to the Treasurer, Rev. MATTHEW BROWN as Diocesan Secretary, and V. Rev. VOLODYMYR ZABLITSKY as Director of Communications.

Date of 2022 Diocesan Assembly

The next Diocesan Assembly is scheduled to be held at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Endicott, NY on November 2nd and 3rd, 2022.

Archbishop MICHAEL entertained a motion to adjourn the Assembly. V. Rev. STEPHEN EVANINA made a motion to adjourn the 2021 Diocesan Assembly. V. Rev. MARYAN CHAYKIVSKY (St. John the Baptist Church, Passaic NJ) seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by virtual hand count.

The Diocesan Assembly adjourned with the singing of “It is Truly Meet” at 3:14 P.M.