

**Minutes of the Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey  
Orthodox Church in America  
Thursday, November 2, 2023**

The clergy and lay delegates of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey met for the annual Diocesan Assembly, on Thursday, November 2, 2023. The Assembly was held at Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, South River, NJ.

Prior to the convening of the Assembly business session, His Eminence ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL celebrated the Divine Liturgy with Diocesan officer clergy members concelebrating.

The Assembly was opened with the singing of “O Heavenly King” at 1:11 PM. “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.

**Appointments**

V. REV. JOSEPH LICKWAR, Chancellor of the Diocese announced the following officers for the 2023 Assembly as follows:

- V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR (Chancellor of the Diocese), Clergy Vice Chair
- Reader MITCHELL VAN DUYN (St. John the Baptist, Rochester, NY), Laity Vice-Chair
- Rev. JOHN MORRIS (Christ the Saviour Church, Paramus, NJ), Secretariat
- Archdeacon MICHAEL SUVAK (Holy Virgin Protection Cathedral, New York, NY), Lay Secretariat
- Mrs. TRUDY ELLMORE (St. Vladimir Orthodox Church, Trenton, NJ), Lay Secretariat
- V. Rev. STEPHEN EVANINA (Holy Resurrection Church, Wayne, NJ), Credentials Monitor
- Rev. SOLOMON LONGO (SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Jersey City, NJ) Credentials Monitor
- Rev. JOEL BRADY (Holy Apostles Mission, Lansing, NY), Ballot Tabulator
- Deacon STEPHAN KARLGUT (SS. Peter and Paul Church, Endicott, NY), 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.

## **Approval of the Minutes of the 2022 Diocesan Assembly**

After the conclusion of his address Archbishop MICHAEL entertained a motion to accept the Minutes of the 2022 Diocesan Assembly.

MOTION: ARCHIMANDRITE JOSEPH (HOFFMAN), (Holy Transfiguration, Pearl River, NY), (second) Mr. George Valis (St. Gregory Orthodox Church, Wappingers Falls, NY) made a motion to accept the 2022 Diocesan Assembly minutes. There were no comments. The motion passed unanimously.

## **Report of the Credentials Monitor**

V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR invited REV. SOLOMON LONGO (SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral, Jersey City, NJ), the Credentials Monitor, to give his report. Father Solomon reported the following:

Hierarch	1
Clergy	44
Lay Delegates	33
Observers	9
<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>87</b>

It was determined that there were sufficient numbers for a quorum.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Report of the Treasurer – Mrs. JAN VAN DUYN Presentation and Approval of the 2023 Financials**

V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR invited Mrs. JAN VAN DUYN (St. John the Baptist Church, Rochester, NY), Diocesan Treasurer, to offer the Treasurer's Report, covering January 1 to September 30, 2023 – nine months of the year. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of parish tithes have been sent to the Diocese. All financial reports are posted monthly to the Diocesan website. She invited questions or comments.

Question by V. Rev. TERENCE BAZ (Assumption of the Holy Virgin Mary Church, Clifton, NJ): How much in total has the Alaska Diocese received?

Answer: Approximately \$330,000 towards their \$1 million goal.

**Report of the Diocesan Auditors –  
Archimandrite JOSEPH (HOFFMAN), Dn. DAVID MALINIAK, and Mrs. JESSICA  
ELIZABETH ANGHEL**

V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR called upon the Diocesan Auditors to make their presentation. Archimandrite JOSEPH (HOFFMAN), (Holy Transfiguration, Pearl River, NY) of the Diocesan Auditors reported:

“The Internal audit of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey financial statements of the Orthodox Church in America Diocese of New York and New Jersey, for the fiscal period of October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023. Based on my audit, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey as of September 30, 2023 and found the books to be in good standing.”

MOTION: Archdn. MICHAEL SUVAK, (Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection, New York, NY), (second) Rev. JOHN HOLODUEK (St. John the Baptist Church, Spring Valley, NY) to accept the Treasurer’s Report, the Auditor’s Report and the 2023 year-to-date financial statements. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Guest Speakers:**

**“We Have Seen the True Light: Reflections from New Converts to Our Diocese”**

V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR invited Rdr. MITCHELL VAN DUYN to introduce our guests, six (6) recent converts to the Holy Orthodox Church. Mr. VanDuyn invited the following gentlemen who shared their personal journeys into the Orthodox Church:

- Dennis Oussenko of Holy Resurrection Church, Wayne, NJ;
- Aaron Thomas of St. Basil the Great Church, Watervliet, NY;
- Will Cost of St. John the Baptist Church, Rochester, NY;
- Justin O’Brien of Holy Trinity Church, Elmira Heights, NY;
- Connor DeFehr of St. John the Baptist Church, Rochester, NY; and
- Benjamin Goes of St. Basil the Great Church, Watervliet, NY.

*Archbishop Michael called for a 15 minute break.*

*Archbishop Michael reconvened the meeting at 4:04 PM.*

**Reports of Diocesan Officers, Departments and Institutions**

The following reports had been distributed electronically prior to the Diocesan Assembly; some were presented with highlights by the persons reporting. Rdr. MITCH VAN DUYN (St. John the Baptist, Rochester, NY) invited each department head who had submitted the above reports to give highlights from that report and to entertain questions.

- Report of the Chancellor (V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR)  
Fr. Joseph added that he often reads the notes included in the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactor letters and appreciates the kind words and remembrances shared by the donors, of the contributions that our clergy, choir directors, fellow parishioners, and Church ministries have made in their lives.
  
- Reports of the Deans:
  - New Jersey (V. Rev. GARY JOSEPH BRETON)
  - New York City (V. Rev. WIACZESLAW KRAWCZUK)
  - New York State (V. Rev. ALEXEY KARLGUT)
  
- Reports from the Diocesan Missions and Mission Stations
  - Holy Apostles Mission, Lansing, NY – Rev. JOEL BRADY
  - St. Olympia Mission, Potsdam, NY – V. Rev. ALEXEY KARLGUT
  - St. Innocent Mission, Oneonta, NY - V. Rev. ALEXEY KARLGUT
  - Plattsburgh Mission Station – V. Rev. TERENCE WASIELEWSKI
  - Watertown Mission Station – Subdeacon STEPHEN TURNER
  
- Metropolitan Council Representatives (V. Rev. DAVID GARRETSON and Mr. MITCHELL VAN DUYN)
  - Father David offered the following brief bullet points.
    - a. The Metropolitan Council was informed of Judge Lanier’s retirement and the beginning of a search for his replacement; this news has been announced on the National Church’s website - OCA.org.
    - b. The Fall session began September 28, 2023 with a video conference. On October 11 and 12, 2023 the meeting continued in-person in Springfield, VA. In fulfillment of the resolution passed at the 2022 All-American Council, the entire Metropolitan Council attended an educational session on pension plans and funding issues presented by Mr. James Heinzman, CPA, CFP.
    - c. At the joint session between the Pension Board and Metropolitan Council, four (4) resolutions were presented by the Metropolitan Council Pension Committee. All Metropolitan Council members except for the four (4) authors voted down the resolutions.
    - d. The OCA Archives have been successfully moved from the Syosset property to the Florovsky Library at St. Vladimir’s Seminary.
    - e. There are four (4) serious interested parties for the Syosset property. The only value to the property is in sub-dividing it.
    - f. Fr. Alexander Rentel highlighted his recent trip to Ukraine and his meetings with His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufriy.
    - g. The OCA budget is paying for two (2) Chancery buildings; one in Syosset and one in Springfield, VA. Funds are being used from unrestricted sources to pay for expenses.

- h. There is no one heading External Affairs (to succeed Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky, of blessed memory).
- i. There is presently no dedicated Director for ORSMA (Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations).

Question: V. Rev. ALEXEY KARLGUT asked Father David if he would document his remarks in writing.

Answer: Father David affirmed he would do so.

- Reports of the Diocesan Departments and Institutions:
  - a. Office of Communications (V. Rev. VOLODYMYR ZABLOTSKY, Director of Diocesan Communications, Holy Trinity Church, Yonkers, NY)
    - Vladyka thanked Father Volodymyr for his yeoman's job with the website.
  - b. Commission on Liturgical Music (V. Rev. 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)
    - Two new members have been appointed to the Commission.
  - c. Commission on Mission and Evangelism (V. Rev. ERIC GEORGE TOSI, Commission Chair, St. Gregory the Theologian Church, Wappingers Falls, NY)
    - Thank you to today's guest speakers.
    - The Evangelism School is changing focus to parish revitalization.
    - V. Rev. PETER OLSEN (St. Basil's Orthodox Church, Watervliet, NY) commented on the benefit of having converts write a short explanation about their journey into the Church and post them on the website. Parishioners are intrigued about this presentation because they know people who are considering the Church. All Christians are called to be missionaries. These stories are talking points of re-evangelism to family members.
  - d. Department of Youth Ministry - Ms. DANIELLE GEEZA, Department Director, was unable to be present. V. Rev. DAVID COWAN gave highlights of her report.
    - Archbishop MICHAEL expressed his thanks for the work Danielle has done for the youth, as she is stepping down from her position at this time. Father Martin and Matushka Dennise Kraus have been appointed to carry on the work until the time of personnel change next summer.
  - e. Department of Christian Education - Matushka TAMARA COWAN, Department Director, was unable to be present. V. Rev. DAVID COWAN gave highlights of her report.
  - f. Spanish Language Outreach (Catechist JOSE IOANNIS SANCHEZ)
    - V. Rev. DAVID COWAN introduced Mr. Sanchez and commented that since 2017 Ioannis has been engaged in this outreach of tilling the soil and planting seeds. Now we are beginning to see and harvest the fruit.
  - g. Diocesan Publication, *Jacob's Well* (Presbyter MATTHEW BROWN, Director, St. Mary Magdalen Church, New York, NY)

- h. Saint Andrew's Camp (Matushka TAMARA COWAN, Program Director and DARIA YORK, Director)
  - V. Rev. PETER BAKTIS (Mother of God, Joy of All Who Sorrow Church, Princeton, NJ) commented there are sometimes transportation issues for getting children to camp. The Deanery of New Jersey is looking into getting a van or bus to take children to/from camp. If you are interested in something like that, speak to Daria York.
- i. Diocesan PSP Compliance Report (Rev. JOEL BRADY, Holy Apostles Mission, Lansing, NY)
  - Archbishop MICHAEL reminded those assembled that when there are annual parish elections, every single new Council needs to review the PSP's, sign compliance to them and notify the Diocesan chancery.

MR. MITCH VAN DUYN (St. John the Baptist Church, Rochester, NY) asked for a motion to accept the Reports of the Diocesan Officers and Department and Institution Heads.

MOTION: V. REV. ALEXEY KARLGUT (SS. Peter and Paul Church, Endicott, NY) made a motion to accept the Reports of the Diocesan Officers and Department and Institution Heads as presented. REV. JOHN HOLODUEK, (St. John the Baptist Church, Spring Valley, NY), seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Adoption of the 2024 Budget**

The Treasurer of the Diocese, Mrs. JAN VAN DUYN, presented the Proposed 2024 Budget.

Comment: Mr. JASON BAKER (Christ the Savior Church, Ballston Lake, NY) commented that he would like to see the documented three percent (3%) raise for Archbishop MICHAEL increased.

Question: Mr. JASON BAKER (Christ the Savior Church, Ballston Lake, NY) asked, how are parish tithes to the Diocese determined?

Answer: We calculate that information based on financial reports received from each parish at the beginning of each year. Those figures are what we use to create the Diocesan budget.

Question: V. Rev. SOPHRONY ROYER (SS. Peter and Paul Church, Bayonne, NJ): What is the purpose of the \$237,350 in the Seminarian Scholarship Fund?

Answer: It is for scholarships. If the budgeted amount is not met, additional funds are used from the Distinguished Diocesan Benefactors Seminarian Scholarship (Restricted) Fund.

MOTION: Archimandrite JOSEPH (HOFFMAN) (Holy Transfiguration, Pearl River, NY), (second) V. Rev. ALEXEY KARLGUT, to accept the 2024 Budget as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Diocesan Charity Appeal for 2024**

Archbishop MICHAEL asked for a motion to accept the 2024 Diocesan Charity Appeal to be dedicated, for a second year, to supporting the Diocese of Alaska Clergy Stipend Fund.

MOTION: V. REV. PETER OLSEN (St. Basil the Great, Watervliet, NY), (second) V. REV. ERIC TOSI (St. Gregory Orthodox Church, Wappingers Falls, NY) to continue our support of the Orthodox Church in America Diocese of Alaska, as initiated at the 2022 Diocesan Assembly. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Resolution from Saints Peter and Paul Church, Bayonne, New Jersey**

Archbishop MICHAEL introduced the Resolution submitted by SS Peter and Paul Church, Bayonne, NJ. The Diocesan Council has approved this as a recommendation to the Assembly participants.

MOTION: V. Rev. SOPHRONY ROYER (SS. Peter and Paul Church, Bayonne, NJ), (second) V. Rev. MICHAEL MEERSON, (Christ the Savior Church, New York City, NY).

Question: V. Rev. PETER BAKTIS (Mother of God, Joy of All Who Sorrow Church, Princeton, NJ) asked, “Is it proper for us to call for the glorification of Metropolitan Leonty?”

Answer: Archbishop MICHAEL replied that he had given the Resolution to His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON, who read it and did not offer a correction. It is the Church speaking. The local Church calls for this.

The motion carried unanimously, by vocal acclamation.

### **Other New Business**

There was no other new business from the floor.

### **Appointments by the Archbishop**

Archbishop MICHAEL reappointed the following as:

Chancellor	V. Rev. JOSEPH LICKWAR
Vice-Chancellor	V. Rev. DAVID COWAN
Diocesan Treasurer	Mrs. JAN VAN DUYN
Diocesan Council Secretary	Mrs. TRUDY ELLMORE

## **Next Diocesan Assembly**

The 2024 Diocesan Assembly will be held at Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, East Meadow, NY, on Thursday and Friday, October 31 – November 1, 2024.

## **Adjournment**

All Diocesan business having been concluded, Rev. JOHN HOLODUEK (St. John the Baptist Church, Spring Valley, NY), (second) Rev. JOEL BRADY (Holy Apostles Mission, Lansing, NY) moved that the Assembly be adjourned. The motion carried unanimously.

The 2023 Diocesan Assembly was closed with the prayer “It is Truly Meet” and the intoning of “Many Years” by His Eminence, ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL at 5:36 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mrs. Trudy Ellmore  
Diocesan Council Secretary