

Report from the Fall 2024 Session of the Metropolitan Council

Fr. David Garretson, Clergy Representative, Diocese of NY and NJ
Mitch VanDuyn, Lay Representative, Diocese of NY and NJ

Here are some highlights and relevant information from the meeting.

Metropolitan Tikhon reported on his travels to Ukraine. The impact of this trip appears to have had a positive impact on communication between the various jurisdictions involved in the conflict, as well as a greater awareness by the US government of the role that the OCA can play in these matters. Blessed are the Peacemakers.

Metropolitan Tikhon requested that individuals, families, parishes and other institutions consider his "Call for Reflections for the 21st AAC". Details can be found on the OCA website here: <https://www.oca.org/news/headline-news/his-beatitude-metropolitan-tikhon-calls-for-reflections-in-preparation-for-21st-all-american-council> On this page is also a very useful companion study guide.

The sale of the former chancellery on L.I. is proceeding, and God willing the sale will be completed late 2025 or early 2026. Details are being held closely confidential at the request of the buyer.

Regarding Mission Planting Grants, Archpriest Thomas Soroka requested (and was given approval by unanimous vote) that the mission planting program not accept new applicants for a year, pending the office's reviewing the purpose and application process of this program. There are very few applicants, and the reasons need to be studied.

On a positive note, Fr Soroka also reported that very good progress is being made on the new education program. The complete program will be presented at the AAC, which will include five complete years of courses, with 32 lessons per year. Samples of the courses looked very good.

Under the office of Pastoral Life, Archpriest Nicholas Solak presented his work over the past year. The office's focus is to support our clergy, particularly through mutual sharing of wisdom and fellowship, which includes both clergy and clergy wives. In the past years Fr Solak has already obtained a significant amount in grants from the Lily (?) Foundation. A new proposed grant for \$1.5 million requires that the office fund a development program to continue the work of the program beyond the life of the grant. This was approved by vote.

The OCA pension continues to be on the road to recovery. The number of participants has increased significantly, greatly aiding in this recovery.

Overall the OCA finances are much improved. The reduced chancery staff is a big causal.

Micky Herzak presented a very affordable Term Life Insurance program his company has developed. Here is a summary of Micky's description of the program.

This is an employer-paid product although it can be a payroll deduction plan with the parish deducting the premium from the employee if the parish chooses not to pay for it. Employees can purchase up to \$150K of insurance with no health questions. Note that all parishes are mandated to purchase \$50K for priests. Other employees, spouses, and children of employees are eligible as well. There are both whole-life and term options.

Micky's company did a similar program for the OCA years ago with the Orthodox Society of America (OSA) which was a fraternal life insurance organization. That program died when the OSA merged with the Catholic related Loyal Christian Benefit Association (LCBA). This new program is with Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. (MetLife) which is one of the world's largest life insurers, so this will have staying power. It is a very flexible product with terrific rates.