

# Council Overview

## Introduction

This document provides a review of the goals of the 14th All-American Council. It summarizes the keynote addresses, workshops, parish profile results, luncheon forums, youth activities, summary team efforts, and other activities held during the week of the Council. The official minutes provide more additional information on the plenary sessions and decisions and appointments for Council assignments.

**The agenda, plenary sessions, and other activities of the 14<sup>th</sup> All-American Council were developed in light of the Council's stated goals.**

### Our Church and the Future 14<sup>th</sup> All-American Council Goals

- a. to improve our understanding of a vision of the indigenous Orthodox Church in North America.
- b. to learn how to effectively and respectfully dialogue about the dimensions of different issues affecting the life of our Church.
- c. to discern and define the top three priorities/challenges facing our Church in the next 10 years.**
- d. to define what North American "Expressions of Orthodoxy" look like.
- e. to align the agenda activities of the departments of the OCA with the above-identified priorities.

The All-American Council held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, July 17-22, 2005, was the 14<sup>th</sup> since the reception of autocephaly by the Orthodox Church in America in 1970. It was the second All-American Council to be held in Canada. The All-American Council is the continuation of the tradition initiated by Saint Tikhon, who convened the First All-American Sobor in 1907. According to the *Statute of the Orthodox Church in America*, the All-American Council is the highest legislative organ of the Church. Its decisions are subject to approval by the Holy Synod of Bishops.

The Council theme, "Our Church and the Future," revealed another step in the growth and ongoing maturation of the Orthodox Church in America as it continues to proclaim the Gospel and minister in the name of Christ at the beginning of its third century on the North American continent.

The 14<sup>th</sup> All-American Council opened with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Herman, and the members of the Holy Synod of Bishops of The Orthodox Church in America on Sunday, July 17, 2005. An estimated 1,100 clergy and faithful, including many from Toronto-area parishes, attended the Liturgy, thereby

placing the work of the Council within the context of the Church's liturgical worship. Nearly 1,200 hierarchs, clergy and lay delegates, and observers participated in the Council, while over 250 children, teens, and young adults participated in the Council's youth programs and activities.

In a series of daily plenary sessions, delegates considered five essential aspects, or "pillars," of Church life – vision and identity as the Orthodox Church in America; relations with others, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox; clergy formation and development; parish health; and evangelization in North America – each of which was associated with the overall Council theme, "Our Church and the Future."

The Council's preparatory study papers and documents were based on the opinions, expertise, and experience of some 40 hierarchs, members of the clergy, and lay men and women who assisted in the drafting process. These resources elaborated on the five "pillars" noted above and served as the foundation for the Council's plenary sessions, discussions, and workshops.

**METROPOLITAN HERMAN, CHANCELLOR, ADDRESS COUNCIL.** In his opening address to the Council, Metropolitan Herman emphasized that while the Orthodox Church in America has a long history, as evidenced in this year's celebrations of the 100th anniversary of Saint Tikhon of Zadonsk Monastery and the 35th anniversaries of the granting of autocephaly and the glorification of Saint Herman of Alaska, the future course of the Church begs the "responsible and right-ordered participation of the entire People of God in the Church's life and work."

Metropolitan Herman underscored the unique position of the Orthodox Church in America, as an autocephalous Church, to address its needs and future direction within the context of the All-American Council.

Metropolitan Herman further shared his ministry since his election as the Church's Primate in 2002, focusing on his archpastoral visits across North America, his efforts to maintain and strengthen relationships with the sister Orthodox Churches around the world, and his concern for a variety of issues, including ecumenical relations, youth, the internet, theological education, and parish life.

In his concluding remarks, Metropolitan Herman encouraged Council participants to embrace a "greater appreciation of our identity and a stronger affirmation of who we are and who we are called to be" by recognizing that the OCA "has been greatly blessed by the lives, labors, and holy examples of many saints."

In his address to the Council, Protopresbyter Robert Kondratich, the OCA's chancellor, echoed many of the themes expressed by Metropolitan Herman. He offered the personal legacies of numerous hierarchs, clergy, and lay persons who had rendered outstanding service to the Church in North America during its two centuries of witness to the Faith as a challenge for renewed enthusiasm for the work and life of the Church.

Father Kondratich also reported on the work of the Chancery and its staff and commended the nearly 300 individuals who, on *voluntary basis*, serve the Church's departments, boards, and commissions. In addressing concerns expressed with regard to the Church's finances, he noted that the decrease in contributions is not something unique to the OCA; rather, the trend has affected virtually every faith community and nonprofit organization due to a variety of factors and economic trends. He also addressed issues related to the OCA's transparency, inter-Orthodox and ecumenical relations, parish and mission development, clergy pensions, the internet, and matters related to abuse.

The full report of Metropolitan Herman and Father Kondratick can be accessed at the OCA web site: [www.oca.org](http://www.oca.org).

**DELEGATES SCRUTINIZE FIVE CRITICAL AREAS OF CHURCH LIFE.** The bulk of the remaining plenary sessions were devoted to the five “pillars” upon which the Council theme was built. In each instance, panel presentations on each pillar were offered, after which delegates participated in workshops and offered a wide range of reactions, recommendations, and ideas for strengthening the life of the Church, which were synthesized by a summary team in regular reports at the beginning of each session. Both large group and smaller breakout session workshops were held with great delegate and observer participation.

**Vision and identity.** Consistent with references in the addresses of Metropolitan Herman and Father Kondratick to the “missionary legacy” of The Orthodox Church in America, delegates expressed a vision of the Church as essentially missionary, one by which the fullness of the Gospel was brought to North America to be proclaimed, rather than preserved. While the missionary imperative finds its roots in Alaska, it is also discovered in the work of Saint Alexis Toth, the vision of the late Metropolitan Leonty, who consistently referred to the Church in North America as “the Mission,” and the ongoing work to revitalize older parishes while planting new communities, especially in regions which in the past had little or no Orthodox presence.

At the same plenary session, Protopresbyter Daniel Hubiak and Dr. Constantine Kallaur, both of whom were among the delegation that received the Tomos of Autocephaly in 1970, highlighted the path The Orthodox Church in America has taken during the past 35 years. In a discussion conducted by a panel consisting of His Grace, Bishop Seraphim of Ottawa and Canada, and two senior Archpriests, Sergei Glagolev and Vladimir Berzonsky, considerations on the Church’s vision and identity, especially as it relates to the Church’s ongoing ministry in North America, were offered. Delegates then participated in table workshops addressing several questions related to this theme.

**Clergy formation and development.** In workshops following a presentation on issues related to clergy formation and development, delegates lodged strong, yet positive, opinions and observations. The central and traditional role of seminary training was affirmed, along with the importance of providing appropriate funding for theological students, the eventual goal being full funding. Many delegates offered proposals for continuing education, distance learning and satellite programs, and other forms of ongoing formation. Of special interest was an emphasis on pastoral rather than theoretical skill building, resource sharing, mentoring, and internship programs for seminarians. Many delegates expressed serious concern for the reestablishment of the summer internship program, suspended in 2005 due to diminished free-will offerings.

Prior to workshops on this theme, a panel consisting of Archpriests Chad Hatfield, Michael Dahulich, and Prof. John Erickson, the deans of Saint Herman, Saint Tikhon’s, and Saint Vladimir’s seminaries respectively, offered insights into various aspects of clergy formation and development. Priest Jonathan Ivanoff amplified their observations by providing statistical information on clergy age, anticipated retirements, and related demographics.

**Parish Health and Evangelization.** Archpriest Daniel Kovalak opened a plenary session with a presentation on issues related to parish health and evangelization. Sharing their experience and opinions on proven and effective strategies for identifying, creating, and implementing ministries in these areas were Archpriests Theodore Bobosh and Ian MacKinnon, Priest Thomas Soroka, Michelle

Jannakos, and Mary Ann Lopoukhine, with Archpriest William Evansky serving as moderator. Priest Eric Tosi reviewed the success of the Church Planting Grant Program and reported on a number of evangelization and mission initiatives.

In the workshops that followed, delegates stressed the importance of education and formation for clergy and laity alike as foundations for successful evangelization and the health of parish communities. As in the workshops on clergy formation, strong feelings were expressed with regard to the need for experiential and practical, skill-based education for every member of the Church, regardless of level or age. Regular personal contact among members of the Church to share skills, provide mentorship and direction, and receive and offer spiritual and pastoral care was also emphasized. In connection with this, the talents of retired clergy were acknowledged, with many suggesting that they be called upon to share their experience in a variety of areas that would benefit parishes and individuals alike.

Numerous delegates also noted the need for sensitivity with regard to multi-cultural ministry and evangelization, not only to traditionally Orthodox cultural/linguistic groups, but also to the Hispanic, Asian-American, and African-American communities. It was interesting to hear numerous delegates relate their experiences in successfully opening their parishes to neighborhood groups and the broader communities in which they exist rather than abandoning the “old neighborhoods” altogether. Similar experiences were shared in a luncheon forum, one of several conducted throughout the week, on ministering to the needs of immigrants and minorities.

**Relations with Orthodox and non-Orthodox.** In the workshops that followed the plenary session at which The Orthodox Church in America’s relations with other Orthodox Churches and non-Orthodox faith communities was discussed, the delegates clearly noted that parish health and successful evangelistic ministries couldn’t be pursued independently of the quest for Orthodox unity in North America. While the importance of inter-Orthodox cooperation in the quest for administrative unity in North America surfaced as a central concern, the reality – that such unity is not likely in the immediate future – should not hinder the work of the local parishes in developing and strengthening cooperative efforts and ministries in an effort to proclaim and witness to the Gospel.

In the area of ecumenical relations, concerns over the Church’s participation in agencies such as the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches were expressed. It was noted that such matters remain within the competency of the Holy Synod of Bishops. In his presentation, Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky, Assistant to the Chancellor for External Affairs and Inter-Church Relations, echoed the sentiment expressed in Metropolitan Herman’s opening address, in which he recognized the tensions that exist as a result of the Church’s participation in ecumenical organizations while expressing even greater concern for the Church’s responsibility to proclaim the fullness of the Gospel. He also described the connections between the ecumenical participation of most of the Orthodox Churches, both in North America and globally, and the Orthodox Churches’ common witness and common theological voice in ecumenical organizations and events. He noted that ecumenical participation certainly requires careful consideration and discernment. As further proof of our historic commitment to this task, it was reported that the Holy Synod of Bishops had blessed the OCA’s participation as a founding member of Christian Churches Together, thereby providing yet another opportunity to proclaim the Gospel on this continent. It was noted that in the Tomos of Autocephaly, the OCA is charged to “maintain direct relations with all other churches and confessions, Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike.”

Prior to the workshops, delegates viewed a nine-minute video in which His Grace, Bishop Basil of Wichita of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, shared his thoughts on varied aspects of Orthodox unity in North America. (Unable to accept the invitation to address the Council in person, Bishop Basil taped his presentation in advance.) The video presentation was well received by the delegates and offered additional food for thought on this “pillar.”

A panel, moderated by David Wagschal, also prepared the delegates for the workshop that followed. Panelists included His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate; Bishop Seraphim; Archpriests Leonid Kishkovsky and Andrew Morbey; Dr. Peter Bouteneff; and Dr. Richard Schneider.

**The Summary Team.** For the first time at an All-American Council, a summary team systematically gathered information on the Council’s daily proceedings, which they reported at the opening of the next day’s plenary session. Appointed at the request of the members of the Holy Synod of Bishops and the Preconciliar Commission, the summary team included several clergy and lay men and women, chaired by Valerie Zahirsky and David Wagschal.

**SUMMARY TEAM FINDINGS.** While no specific resolutions were presented to Council delegates, a number of serious proposals and ideas were shared in a final presentation offered by the Summary Team. While lack of sufficient funding surfaced as the main obstacle to accomplishing many of the Church’s goals, delegates did offer specific long- and short-range proposals in three broad areas.

**Education and Formation.** With funding an ongoing obstacle for many wishing to pursue theological educations, especially as the number of married students continues to grow, delegates recommended that within five to ten years, full funding for all seminarians studying for the priesthood should be available. Delegates also shared strong feelings for the development of skill-based educational resources and mentoring and internship programs, adding that within ten years such programs should become a normal part of clergy formation. Delegates offered two recommendations that could be implemented within the next three years: the creation of national “Orthodox Life” conferences and the establishment of an ongoing pastoral education and care program directed by seasoned clergy. The revival of the summer internship program was recommended as a priority that could be implemented within the next three months. It also was recommended that the development of the means to implement the long and short-range proposals be referred to the Department of Christian Education.

**Orthodox Unity.** Four general recommendations emerged within the area of Orthodox unity. Delegates reaffirmed the role of The Orthodox Church in America as a leading voice for Orthodox unity. They also recommitted themselves to the prayerful support of Metropolitan Herman and the members of the Holy Synod in their ongoing efforts to promote Orthodox unity. The development of inter-Orthodox collaboration, especially on the local level, was affirmed as a principle of action. Delegates also recommended that the bilateral commission between the Orthodox Church in America and the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America be reestablished.

**Mission.** While delegates affirmed the missionary nature of the Church and, as a long-range goal, proposed establishment of 50 new missions and 50 revitalized parishes within the next five to ten years, the establishment of a national evangelization program topped the list of proposals delegates felt could be reasonably implemented. Other proposals included the introduction of courses on mission into the seminary curriculum, the appointment of mission directors in every diocese, and an

increased visibility and profile for the OCA's annual mission appeal. Consideration of mission as the theme of the 15th All-American Council was also proposed. It was also recommended that the Department of Evangelization develop specific recommendations to implement these long- and short-range goals before the 2005 fall session of the Holy Synod.

**FINANCES AND THE FAIR SHARE PROPOSAL** An entire plenary session was devoted to funding the vision and ongoing mission of the Church. Archpriest John Dresko, chairman of the Department of Stewardship, offered a presentation on the Church's financial needs and the proposed 2006 budget of \$2,600,000. He stressed that insufficient funding limits the implementation of the Church's vision and mission and generates deficits due to a lack of adequate income for necessary as well as unavoidable expenditures. In line with the report of Archpriest Dimitri Oselinsky, treasurer, he reported that deficit reduction and repayment of borrowed funds are important issues.

## **OTHER COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS**

**Liturgical Services.** The celebration of daily Vespers, Matins, and the Divine Liturgy provided the essential context in which the Council's deliberations and sessions took place and served as a tangible reminder that, above all else, God's people are a worshipping people. Daily sermons challenged delegates and observers to deepen their commitment to Christ and His Body, the Church, while Scripture readings set the tone for each plenary session. Council participants also sang the Akathistos Hymn in honor of the North American Saints in celebrating the memory of those who, as Metropolitan Herman stated, "established the vision and path to which we continue to commit ourselves."

**Youth and Young Adult Activities.** A full schedule of activities and outings organized by the Department of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry was offered to the Council's 250 youth observers. Assisting Priest Michael Anderson, department director, were dozens of volunteers and chaperones. All activities were focused on the theme "Our Church and the Future: Become What You Are." Religious discussions and programs for all ages, and outings to Niagara Falls and other attractions, provided a wealth of opportunities for inspiration and fellowship. Young adults also enjoyed a cruise and participated in an afternoon of ministry at one of Toronto's soup kitchens. Delegates enjoyed a presentation by the youth and young adult observers at the closing plenary session.

**Luncheon Forums.** Under the direction of Arlene Kallaur, nearly two dozen luncheon forums were held. The lively presentations were extremely well attended and offered an opportunity for delegates to share experiences and obtain practical resources and advice for implementation in their respective parishes. Luncheon forums included the following themes.

**Technology and the Church:** Deacon Kirill Sokolov

**Outreach to the Hungry and Homeless:** The Priest Jacob Myers (Loaves and Fishes Program, Atlanta, GA), the Priest Roberto Ubertino (Saint John the Compassionate Mission, Toronto, ON, Canada), Kathy Pieracci, (Saint Michael Food Distribution Program, Sacramento, CA)

**How Do I as an Orthodox Christian Evangelize? What Skills Do I Need?:** Priest Eric Tosi, moderator; the Archpriest John Matusiak; the Priests Ted Pisarchuk and David Rucker

**Working with New Immigrants in the Parish:** Archpriest John Matusiak

**Hosting a Seminarian Intern: What It Involves for a Parish:** Archpriest Alexander Garklavs, Moderator; Archpriests Paul Kucynda and Lawrence Margitich; Priests. Barnabas Fravel and John Hainsworth

**Overcoming Hurdles in Developing Parish Ministries:** Priest Stephen Voytovich

**Conflict Management: How to Deal with Challenging People:** Dr. Albert Rossi

**A Parish Nursing Program: How It Works, Its Benefits:** Natalie Stavrevsky

**A Pan-Orthodox Singles Group: How It Works in the DC Area:** Archpriest Gregory Safchuk

**Strengthening the Parish Family:** Archpriest Ken Stavrevsky, moderator; Suzanne Aleandro, Dunia Hubiak, Lori Kochan, and Karen Mravetz

**Christian Parenting:** Archpriest Michael Matsko, moderator; Priest Vladimir Aleandro, Stephanie Reimund

**Retirees: A Golden Resource:** Kitty Vitko, Leon Sheean, and Dr. Richard West

**Sanctity of Human Life Issues:** Priest Thomas Moore, Leon Sheean, Kathy Kovalak

**Stress, Depression, Addiction, Suicide Prevention:** Archpriests Frank Mayernick and Ken Stavrevsky; Priests John Chudik and John Kreta

**The OCA Pension Plan:** Archpriest Dimitri Oselinsky

**“Chew and Chat” About Christian Education: Members of the Department of Christian Education Support for Family Caregiving at Home, at a Distance:** Donna Karabin, Diane Pasca, and Arlene Kallaur

**Worship and Pastoral Coverage in Times of War and Conflict: Accounts from Chaplains Who Recently Returned from Afghanistan and Iraq:** Archpriest Ted Boback, moderator; Archpriests Jerome Cwiklinski, Joseph Gallick, and John Stefero; Priest John Anderson

**Connecting Our Youth Across Parish Boundaries:** The Revs. Michael Anderson and David Subu

**The Church Choir: Sharing Needs, Challenges, Tools for Growth:** David Drillock

**Displays and Exhibits.** Over 100 displays and exhibits filled the exhibit room during the All-American Council. Religious items, books, vestments, candles, and other church-related items were on display and for sale during the week.

In addition, the dioceses and all of The Orthodox Church in America’s departments hosted exhibits.

**Diocesan Spotlight.** The Rev. Jonathan Ivanoff offered a 30-minute Power Point presentation that highlighted the dioceses of The Orthodox Church in America. The presentation offered delegates a wealth of information on the life of the Church across North America and a better understanding of the richness of our Church under the leadership of the diocesan hierarchs. The Diocesan Spotlight will be available in the near future on The Orthodox Church in America web site.

**Elections to Church-Wide Positions.** Elections for representatives to the Metropolitan Council, Pension Board, and Audit Committee were also conducted. Elected to serve six-year terms on the Metropolitan Council were the Very Rev. Theodore Boback and Professor John Erickson. The Very Rev. Constantine White and Dr. Faith Skordinski were elected to three-year terms, while the Rev. John Maxwell and Ms. Eleana Silk were elected as alternates. The Very Rev. Dimitri Oselinsky and Mr. David Drillock were elected to serve six-year terms on the Pension Board. Elected to serve three-year terms were the Very Rev. John Steffaro and Mr. Gregory Sheshko. The Very Rev. John

Zdinak and Mr. Nicholas Lezinsky were elected as alternates. Elected to the Audit Committee were the Very Rev. Paul Suda and Mr. David Donlick, with Mr. Frank Tkacz serving as alternate.

**Special Events.** A number of special events were held throughout the week

On Monday evening, the seminaries hosted receptions for their graduates, students, and interested faithful. During the reception for members of the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards (FOS), the Very Rev. Eugene Vansuch, the newly appointed FOS executive director, welcomed the guests and encouraged them to strengthen their witness to and support of the Church through increased stewardship. During the reception, Metropolitan Herman presented a synodal citation to the Very Rev. Joseph Fester, former FOS executive director, in recognition of his years of service in this position.

A breakfast for members of the Holy Synod of Bishops and clergy wives was a highlight of the week. In his remarks, Metropolitan Herman thanked the clergy wives for their essential ministry and commitment to the Church, their parishes, their husbands, and their families.

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