



**MINUTES**  
**of the Joint Meeting of the Lesser Synod**  
**and the 2015 Fall Session of**  
**the Metropolitan Council**

**Tuesday, September 22 – Thursday, September 24, 2015**  
**Immaculate Conception Seminary, Huntington, NY**

*These draft minutes are subject to approval at a subsequent meeting of the Metropolitan Council*

**PARTICIPANTS**

**LESSER SYNOD**

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon  
His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek

His Eminence, Archbishop Mark  
His Eminence, Archbishop Michael

**METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**

**CHURCH OFFICERS**

Archpriest John Jillions, *Chancellor*  
Melanie Ringa, *Treasurer*

Archpriest Eric Tosi, *Secretary*

**MEMBERS ELECTED BY THE ALL-AMERICAN COUNCIL**

Archpriest Chad Hatfield (*Tuesday only*)  
Archpriest Antonio Perdomo  
Archpriest Thomas Moore

Katherine Vitko  
Larry Skvir

**DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES**

**Diocese of Alaska**  
Archpriest John Dunlop

Patrick Pletnikoff

**Albanian Archdiocese**  
Archpriest Joseph Gallick (*except Thursday*)

Donna Dimitri (*except Thursday*)

**Bulgarian Diocese**  
Priest Martin Watt

**Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania**  
Archpriest James Weremedic

David Yeosock

**Diocese of the Midwest**  
Archpriest Alexander Kuchta

Robert Graban

**Diocese of New England**Archpriest Robert Dick (*except Thursday*)

David Zavednak

**Diocese of New York/New Jersey**

Archpriest John Shimchick

**Diocese of the South**

Priest Joseph Lucas

Angela Parks, Esq.

**Diocese of Washington**

Priest John Vitko

Elizabeth Mikhalevsky

**Diocese of the West**

Archpriest John Dresko

Wesley J. Smith, Esq.

**ABSENT**Archpriest William Evansky (*Diocese of Western Pennsylvania*)Archpriest Anatoliy Melnyk (*Archdiocese of Canada*)Deacon Justin Mitchell (*Archdiocese of Canada*)Maureen Jury (*Member elected by the All-American Council*)Dr. John Schultz (*Diocese of Western Pennsylvania*)Esteban Vazquez (*Bulgarian Diocese*)**GUESTS (for all sessions unless otherwise indicated)**Protopresbyter Leonid Kishkovsky (*Director of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations*)– *Wednesday afternoon*)Maureen Ahearn (*Pension Plan Administrator – Tuesday afternoon*)Raymond Boyd (*Stewardship Assistant - Wednesday morning*)Cindy Heise (*Coordinator for the Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations – Thursday only*)Judge E.R. Lanier (*legal consultant – except Thursday*)Alexis Liberovsky (*recording secretary*)Warren Rivetz (*advisor to the OCA Pension Board – Tuesday afternoon*)**TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2015**

Following an all-day retreat for the Metropolitan Council conducted by Archpriest John Behr and Dr. Mary Ford on Monday September 21, 2014, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon celebrated a prayer service at 9:05 AM on Tuesday morning to open the meeting at the Immaculate Conception Seminary.

**A. Agenda: Introduction (attached)**

The meeting was then called to order. Fr. Eric Tosi requested approval of changes to the agenda in that the ORSMA report would take place on Thursday, the External Affairs Report would take place whenever Fr. Kishkovsky is able to come to the meeting in the midst of medical treatment and the Pension report would be delivered this afternoon. It was also noted that Judge E.R. Lanier would present the Statute Implementation report, as Fr. Alexander Rentel is unable to attend the meeting.

**A.1. MOTION WEREMEDIC/KUCHTA – To approve the agenda for this meeting as amended. CARRIED.**

**B. Roll Call/Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting (attached)**

Fr. Tosi then conducted the roll call and announced guests who would be present at various points during this meeting (see participants list). He requested approval of Alexis Liborovsky as recording secretary for the meeting, which was accepted without objection. He presented the draft minutes of the previous meeting of the Metropolitan Council on February 10-12, 2015 for approval.

**B.1. MOTION ZAVEDNAK/DRESKO — To accept the previous meeting minutes of February 10-12, 2015 as presented. CARRIED.**

**D. Metropolitan's Report (attached)**

Metropolitan Tikhon presented his attached written report. He welcomed the members of the Lesser Synod present for the meeting and congratulated Archbishops Mark and Michael on their elevations to that rank earlier this year. He also extended a particular welcome to the new members of the Council and asked each to introduce themselves. He noted the significance of the previous day's retreat. He then highlighted the success and important decisions of the recent All-American Council and thanked all those who contributed to its fruitful organization and expressed gratitude to the members of the chancery staff for all of their work. Fr. Eric Tosi expressed the profound gratitude of the Church for His Beatitude's leadership.

**E. Guiding Framework Session I**

Metropolitan Tikhon then delivered an extensive PowerPoint presentation entitled "*The Apostolic Work of the Church*" which he envisions as a guiding framework for the life of the Orthodox Church in America. This is a continuing elaboration of his address to the 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council and other public statements. The guiding framework includes four pillars:

- I – The Spiritual Life
- II – Stewardship
- III - Evangelism and Outreach
- IV – External Relations: Long-Term Goals

Each pillar includes outlines of vision, goals, outcomes and actions. Seeking input for the further development of the framework, His Beatitude sought feedback from the Metropolitan Council, which engendered wide-ranging discussion of all aspects of the framework and its eventual implementation.

Following a short recess at 11:03 AM, the session resumed at 11:27 AM.

**E. Guiding Framework Session I (continued)**

Metropolitan Tikhon concluded his PowerPoint presentation and further discussion ensued. He noted that after incorporation of received input and discussion by the Holy Synod, the draft framework would be released to the Church for further feedback through diocesan and other governing bodies of the Church.

Following a recess for lunch at 12:33 PM, the afternoon session was called to order at 1:37 PM.

**G. Chancellor's Report**

Fr. John Jillions provided a brief update to his recent extensive report to the 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council. He noted that the report of the Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA) would be presented by Cindy Heise on Thursday. He stated that assertions recently circulated on the internet that Cindy Heise is Metropolitan Tikhon's niece are completely false. He highlighted recent events at St. Catherine Representation Church in Moscow and the activity of the revived Department of Pastoral Life headed by Fr. Nathan Preston.

## **F. Pension Board Report**

Maureen Ahearn, OCA Pension Plan Administrator, presented a new policy drafted by the Pension Board for approval by the Metropolitan Council. This policy on Mission Parish Priest Retirement Benefits has already received the blessing of the Holy Synod. After discussion and some revision, the policy was approved.

### **F.1. MOTION DRESKO/YEOSOCK – To approve the Mission Parish Priest Retirement Benefits Policy for the Orthodox Church in America Pension Plan as follows:**

#### **Mission Parish Priest Retirement benefits**

**Purpose:** The following parameters are identified to accommodate retired priests who choose to serve in a mission parish without affecting their pension.

1. Priest must be of retirement age (over 65 years of age).
2. Priest can only serve in any one mission parish for a total of two years and may serve in multiple mission parishes.
3. Mission parish must be in existence less than 5 years.
4. Mission parish must be servicing less than 50 souls (defined as any man, woman, or child) at the time the priest is first assigned to serve the mission.
5. Parish must be providing less than \$2000/month (\$24,000/year) total compensation which includes value of provided housing or housing allowance, salary, insurance, and any and all reimbursements (e.g. car, gas, phone, internet, meals, subscriptions, registration fees).
6. While participating in this program, both church and priest contributions to the pension plan will not be required.
7. Documentation of these parameters will be required as designated by pension board.
8. **Each mission parish must apply for inclusion in this program. CARRIED.**

Per the discussion, the Pension Board is asked to explore drafting of a similar policy for retired priests serving older parishes. Regarding the Pension Plan, Ms. Ahearn reported that there are currently 331 active members in the Plan and 170 beneficiaries. Warren Rivetz, investment advisor to the OCA Pension Board, reported a slight decline in Pension Plan assets since the All-American Council due to economic volatility. Questions and discussion ensued.

## **H. Secretary's report (attached)**

Fr. Eric Tosi presented the attached funding proposal for Mission Planting Grants in 2016 from Fr. John Parker, Chairman of the Department of Evangelization. After discussion, the proposal was approved.

### **H.1. MOTION MIKHALEVSKY/K. VITKO - To approve funding for planting grants in 2016 as presented totaling \$106,000. CARRIED.**

Fr. Tosi then presented the attached a plan for two new publications—a monthly PDF news digest that will feature highlights from the OCA web site, to be electronically delivered to parishes for printing and distribution; and an annual, hardcopy journal that will be sent in bulk to all parishes. Each edition of the journal will feature articles and reflections on a specific theme, the first of which will be devoted to evangelization and mission. After a wide-ranging discussion that included other communications issues, the proposal was approved.

Finally, Fr. Tosi reported on the results of the recent 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council and presented the attached results of a post-Council survey of participants. He particularly noted the success of the youth program and the convocation of the FOCA convention jointly with the Council. A variety of issues regarding the Council was discussed at length.

Following a short recess at 3:20 PM, the session resumed at 3:38 PM.

**J. Legal matters (attached)**

Angela Parks, the new Chairperson of the Legal Committee, presented its attached report.

**J.1. MOTION PARKS/GALLICK – To move into executive session. CARRIED.**

Confidential details pertaining to legal matters were discussed in executive session.

**J.2. MOTION DRESKO/KUCHTA – To move out of executive session. CARRIED.**

A variety of legal issues including attorney-client privilege and confidentiality was discussed. The need to explore possible new avenues for the handling of legal matters by the Church was, in principle, approved and this is to be further discussed at the next Metropolitan Council meeting.

**E. Guiding Framework Session I (continued)**

Metropolitan Tikhon requested discussion of an overall assessment of the Guiding Framework and its eventual implementation. Among the key points stressed during deliberation was the need to develop an Orthodox culture and to inspire people to share in a common vision.

The session was adjourned at 5:28 PM.

After dinner, an orientation session was conducted for the many newly elected members of the Metropolitan Council.

**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2015**

Following the celebration of a Divine Liturgy at Saint Sergius Chapel at 8:00 AM, the meeting was opened with prayer led by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon at the Immaculate Conception Seminary at 11:05 AM.

**K. Stewards of the OCA (attached)**

Raymond Boyd, Stewardship Assistant, delivered the attached PowerPoint presentation on the Stewards of the OCA (SOCA), which included a historical overview back to the founding of the Fellowship of Orthodox Stewards (FOS) in 1980, as well as future plans and goals for SOCA. He then presented a broad overview of stewardship based on the teachings of the Church. Fr. Jillions and Melanie Ringa commended Mr. Boyd for his work, which he began in June. A discussion focused largely on stewardship education ensued.

**L. Internal Auditors Selection**

Fr. Tosi and Fr. Martin Watt explained the OCA Statute requirements and qualifications for the OCA internal auditors and appealed to Council members to search for qualified people to fill the positions on the Auditing Committee. Melanie Ringa explained the differing roles of external and internal auditors.

**E. Guiding Framework Session I (continued)**

Discussion of the Guiding Framework continued particularly concerning timeline and process, including soliciting further feedback.

Following a recess for lunch at 12:34 PM, the afternoon session was called to order at 1:40 PM.

## **N. Guiding Framework Session II**

Fr. Tosi outlined the current structure of committees of the Metropolitan Council. Fr. Jillions led an extensive discussion on the expediency of reactivating the Administrative Committee. It was pointed out while this Committee is indicated in the Statute, it is not mandatory that it be active. A straw poll of meeting participants indicated a nearly unanimous opinion that the Administrative Committee should not be reactivated at the present time. The possible restructuring of other committees was also discussed.

Following a short recess at 2:52 PM, the session resumed at 3:04 PM.

## **N. Guiding Framework Session II (continued)**

Discussion of committee structure within the Metropolitan Council continued. It was suggested that the Internal Governance Committee should use suggestions from this discussion to develop a revised committee structure in the context of rewriting the Metropolitan Council Handbook.

## **O. New Statute Implementation (attached)**

In the absence of the Fr. Alexander Rentel, who was unable to attend the meeting, Judge E.R. Lanier presented the attached memorandum from Fr. Rentel on the implementation of the revised OCA Statute adopted at the 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council. He reported that, as indicated in the new Statute, it will become fully effective on November 1, 2015, but a transition period continues until the end of 2017. He noted that the Statute would continue to be revised at future All-American Councils. Some minor, mostly typographical, errors have been found and will be corrected through future amendment. It was indicated that any questions or concerns regarding implementation of the revised Statute should be directed to the Commission on Canons and Statute.

## **P. Treasurer's Report (attached)**

Melanie Ringa highlighted the attached Treasurer's report with a PowerPoint presentation. She noted that the internal and external audits had been reported at the recent All-American Council. She then highlighted the 2014 Audit-Reconciliation of Internal Report to Final Audit and noted auditor recommendations. She indicated that a formal gift acceptance policy is being developed. She reported that a search would soon be conducted for a new external auditing firm. She then shared 2015 financial results for the first half of the year as well as the details of expenditures for the 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council.

## **Q. Financial Development Committee**

David Yeosock, Chairman of the Financial Development Committee, presented a brief oral report, noting that as his term on the Council is expiring, Larry Skvir will be the new chairman of the committee. The activities of SOCA were discussed.

## **R. 2016 Budget Presentation (attached)**

Melanie Ringa presented highlights of the 2016 budget and provided explanations of some expenditures in comparison to previous years. It was noted that as the ORSMA coordinator became part time in April, the resulting savings in salary was used to engage Bernard Wilson as a contract investigator for ORSMA.

## **I. External Affairs Report**

Protopresbyter Leonid Kishkovsky, Director of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations, delivered an oral report to update his written report and published video address to the recent 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council. He provided insights regarding the upcoming Great and Holy Council, OCA relations with other Orthodox Churches, non-Orthodox religious bodies and ecumenical organizations. Metropolitan Tikhon offered

additional comments on the meeting of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA the previous week. He noted that External Relations: Long-Term Goals is the least developed of the four pillars of the Guiding Framework. He suggested that the OCA needs to regain the strong voice it had on the international scene at the time of the granting of autocephaly. His Beatitude then expressed the Church's profound gratitude to Fr. Kishkovsky for his continued valuable work in spite of serious health issues.

Following a recess for dinner at 5:28 PM, the evening session was called to order at 6:33 PM.

**R. 2016 Budget Presentation (continued)**

Melanie Ringa continued presentation of the OCA budget for 2016, particularly in terms of anticipated revenue based on the finance resolution passed at the 18<sup>th</sup> All-American Council. The process of employing Bernard Wilson as a contract investigator for ORSMA was discussed at length. It was agreed that such engagement of personnel, even on a contract basis, should be undertaken in consultation with the Finance Committee or Metropolitan Council.

**R.1. MOTION DIMITRI/WEREMEDIC - To approve the proposed budget for 2016 as presented. CARRIED.**

In view of the anticipated budget surplus for 2015, Melanie Ringa presented a request for funding to engage a consultant as proposed by the Archives Advisory Committee and to enable improvements recommended by the consultant. The cost of the consultant would be \$7200 while monitoring equipment and initial improvements are estimated at \$3000. In response to questions, OCA Archivist Alexis Liberovsky explained that the consultant is an environmental engineer who would assess conditions in our repository, install environmental monitoring equipment and recommend needed improvements.

**R.2. MOTION RINGA/DRESKO – To adjust the 2015 budget and authorize expenditure of \$10,200 for the environmental engineering assessment and related expenses. CARRIED with 1 opposed (Graban).**

Father John Dresko suggested that, if surplus funds remain through the end of the year, the old swimming pool at Westwood (the chancery property) be filled in – an expense that had been tabled in previous years. Fr. Tosi noted that previous estimates indicated that the cost of this work would be at least \$16,000.

**R.3. MOTION DRESKO/MIKHALEVSKY – If funding remains available in 2015, the administration is authorized to expend the funds necessary to fill in the swimming pool at Westwood. CARRIED with 1 opposed (Smith).**

The session was adjourned with prayer at 7:28 PM.

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2015**

The morning session was opened with prayer at 9:04 AM.

**W. Future Meeting Dates**

Fr. Tosi proposed that the Metropolitan Council meetings in 2016 take place on February 16-18 and September 20-22, with a retreat on September 19. These dates were approved by consensus.

**G.1. ORSMA**

Cindy Heise highlighted the confidential report from the Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA), which included case statistics, coordinator activities, ORSMA statistics analysis and goals for the

rest of 2015 and 2016. She noted that her focus is prevention and education. She reported that 359 youth volunteers and clergy have received training in the “*Stewards of Children*” program. She indicated that an abbreviated version of the OCA Policies, Standards, and Procedures (PSPs) on Sexual Misconduct as well as revised annual compliance forms have been posted on the OCA website. Questions and discussion ensued, particularly concerning various issues pertaining to clergy health.

Following a short recess at 10:21 AM, the session resumed at 10:51 AM.

**S. Guiding Framework Session III**

Metropolitan Tikhon led continuing discussion of the Guiding Framework. He requested feedback on each of the four pillars. Extensive consideration and deliberation of numerous issues ensued.

**X. Adjournment**

In concluding remarks, Metropolitan Tikhon thanked everyone for a productive meeting, expressing special appreciation to David Yeosock whose term on the Metropolitan Council is ending. He noted that the Guiding Framework would be revised based on suggestions and discussions at this meeting and then shared with the Holy Synod. He anticipated continued fruitful work with the Metropolitan Council on the framework for the vision of the OCA. His Beatitude declared the meeting closed at 12:45 PM.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer

Respectfully submitted,

Alexis Liberovsky,  
Recording Secretary