

Responses to Current Questions Concerning the 17th All-American Council at Holy Trinity Church, Parma, OH on Tuesday, November 13, 2012

In response to a number of questions that have been received concerning the 17th All-American Council, the Preconciliar Commission has compiled the following responses. While not exhaustive, the responses will help in preparing for the forthcoming Council. Additional questions not addressed herein may be submitted to the Preconciliar Commission at info@oca.org.

1. Why is the AAC being held at Holy Trinity Church in Parma and how was the date established?

The Holy Synod of Bishops instructed the Preconciliar Commission to hold the AAC as soon as possible due to the requirements of Article IV, Section 4 of the OCA Statute, which reads: “*When a vacancy has occurred in the office of Metropolitan, the bishop senior by rank and date of consecration shall convene the Holy Synod. After the formal vote declaring the vacancy, the Holy Synod will proceed with the election of a locum tenens. Within a period not exceeding three months (unless some unavoidable necessity forces a prolongment [sic] of this period), the locum tenens will convene an All-American Council at which a successor shall be elected.*” The members of the Holy Synod decided to convene the AAC on Tuesday, November 13, 2012, at their August 2012 meeting, the consensus being that this would be the most reasonable time to organize and gather the Church in council.

The other instructions included the desire to convene the AAC in a church if possible, rather than a hotel or other venue, as it would be more in keeping with the nature of the gathering. Consideration was also given to minimizing the costs associated with the AAC and its delegates, since the gathering was an unexpected one – that is, at the beginning of 2012 it had not been a consideration. There are only a few parish churches in the OCA that are large enough to accommodate a gathering of this size. After reviewing a number of parish churches, Holy Trinity Church in Parma was selected, as it is the largest church building in the OCA and its faithful parishioners expressed a willingness to host the AAC.

2. What is included on the agenda for the AAC and why is it limited to the election of a Metropolitan?

The agenda may be found in the *Delegate Handbook*, posted on-line at www.oca.org.

It was decided upon by the members of the Preconciliar Commission and approved by the Holy Synod based on two points.

- The first is that the OCA Statute specifies that an election to fill a vacancy in the Metropolitan See must be the sole agenda item. In the past, similar elections were held in conjunction with regular AACs, during which the ordinary business of the AAC was suspended, so that the Council could be declared open for the purpose of electing a new Metropolitan. After the election the AAC resumed its regular business. In the case of the forthcoming AAC, the sole purpose of the Council is the election of a new Metropolitan; as such, this is the sole item on the agenda.
- There is precedent in this, inasmuch as the 12th All-American *Sobor* of 1965 – prior to the granting of autocephaly, such gatherings were referred to by the Russian term *sobor* — had as its sole purpose the election of a new Metropolitan after the repose of Metropolitan Leonty. This was used as the precedent in establishing the agenda for this special AAC.

As such, the Holy Synod determined that this fit the requirements of a single-agenda Council.

3. Are there any fees associated with attending the AAC?

The Holy Synod determined that, because the 17th AAC constitutes an unbudgeted expense, the dioceses would assume the costs. The 16th AAC ended with a surplus of about \$60,000, which was recently returned to the dioceses. The costs associated with convening the 17th AAC are approximately the same as this amount, so the surplus will cover the expenses for this AAC. Consequently, there is no fee for clergy and lay delegates for the 17th AAC, although delegates are responsible for their own travel and hotel expenses. The costs of meals are covered by the diocesan assessment.

4. I heard that the registration numbers are low and that is why the OCA extended the deadline.

In fact, registration numbers are now close to 600 clergy and lay delegates. There are about 65 observers. The deadline was extended because of the number of calls and emails asking if they could submit their registration packet late because they were having parish meetings after the deadline. The deadline was extended to accommodate them (and this happens at every AAC).

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5. Why is the observer registration limited in numbers?

Provisions for observers always have been made for AACs. Observers are seated in a designated area, but they are not permitted to speak or vote or take an active part in the proceedings. Members of the Preconciliar Commission made the same provisions for the 17th AAC, but they were forced to limit the number of observers due to space considerations. Since the AAC will be convened in a parish church, it was determined that the only space available for observers was the choir loft, which has limited seating. This determination in no way is intended to keep people from attending the AAC; rather, it is a simple matter of logistics. Another option – simulcasting the proceedings in the church hall – does not provide the same experience as one would have if one were present in the church itself.

At the same time, the AAC will webcast on Ancient Faith Radio so that anyone, present or not, can participate via the internet.

6. Why are retired clergy and observers being charged a fee and delegates are not?

In years past, retired clergy and observers were charged a nominal fee to cover expenses associated with the AAC. The Preconciliar Commission decided that it would continue this practice, and that a nominal fee of \$50.00 to cover administrative and food costs associated with the Council again would be appropriate. The \$50.00 fee also covers a brunch and a dinner.

7. What is the Preconciliar Commission and what are its responsibilities?

The Preconciliar Commission is the body established by the Statute to specifically organize and run the AAC. An outline of the duties of the Preconciliar Commission and guidelines for its formation may be found in Article III, Section 5 of the OCA Statute. All decisions on the planning and operation of the AAC are presented as recommendations by the Preconciliar Commission to the Metropolitan Council and receive the blessing of the Holy Synod. As such, the members of the Holy Synod and the Metropolitan Council are fully informed of all recommendations presented by the Preconciliar Commission, the members of which also have specific responsibilities and deadlines to meet in the planning process.

8. Will there be parking available at Holy Trinity Church?

There is plenty of parking at Holy Trinity Church, located at 6822 Broadview Road, Parma, OH. Overflow parking will be available at Pokrova Ukrainian Catholic Church, adjacent to Holy Trinity Church, which has agreed to assist us in this regard.

9. Will transportation be available between the church and the hotels?

There are hotel shuttle buses from the airport to the hotels. Delegates should look for signs for their hotels at the airport. Shuttle buses will be provided on Monday and Tuesday to transport people from the hotels to the church and back again. Appropriate signs will be posted at the hotels and the church. Travel time is about 10 minutes. On Tuesday, there also will be a bus to take people either back to the hotels or to the airport after the dinner. Hotel shuttle buses will make frequent trips to the airport.

10. Are people who are not members of the OCA permitted to attend?

While outside observers are permitted to attend, as space is available, they must be approved by the Preconciliar Commission. There are a few individuals who will be assisting at the AAC, such as those associated with Ancient Faith Radio, certain specialists in administrative duties who have assisted the Church in the past, and others who have made special requests. While at a regular AAC the agenda is more comprehensive, with sessions spanning several days, and there is far more space available, limitations in the number of requests honored have had to be taken into consideration.

11. Are hierarchs and clergy from other Orthodox Churches being invited to attend?

It was decided by the Holy Synod that the 17th AAC would be limited to OCA delegates due to the space requirements and in the interest of minimizing expenses. Normally at an AAC, certain costs are covered by the OCA for visiting delegations; the budget for the 17th AAC does not permit this. However, it was decided that, with the enthronement of the new Metropolitan in January 2013, delegations from all Orthodox Churches will be invited to attend and to concelebrate.

12. Are former and retired hierarchs of the OCA and bishops without a diocese allowed to attend? What level of participation are they allowed?

According to Article III, Section 2 of the Statute, “All bishops of the Church” are allowed to attend. In the past, former and retired hierarchs have attended AACs and were seated in an appropriate place. They have

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the same rights as retired clergy, but they are not permitted to speak. Former and retired hierarchs are not permitted to vote in the nomination process due to their status (only active delegates can vote), nor may they vote in the election process of the Holy Synod, since only ruling diocesan bishops are eligible to vote, as noted in Article IV, Section 4 of the Statute. Auxiliary bishops are not permitted to vote in the Holy Synod election (This is also true of the proceedings of Holy Synod meetings, at which former, retired and auxiliary hierarchs are allowed to be present but may not vote on decisions.)

13. Are former or retired hierarchs and bishops without a diocese permitted to be nominated?

There is nothing in the Statute that explicitly prohibits such a nomination. However, it is up to the Holy Synod to elect the new Metropolitan according to the procedures of the Statute.

14. Is Metropolitan Jonah still the Archbishop of Washington even though he resigned as Metropolitan?

According to the Canons of the Orthodox Church, every bishop must have a See. The See of the Metropolitan is Washington, DC. The office of the Metropolitan and the See cannot be separated. Bishop Alexander is presently the *locum tenens* of the Diocese of Washington.

15. There is a rumor that there will be armed security in the church.

There will be no armed security in the church. Parma auxiliary police, who are unarmed, will be assisting in parking and directions. Because of expected heavy traffic, there may be a uniformed Parma police officer and a patrol car stationed where the church driveway meets the road for traffic control, something common for large public events.

16. There are rumors of disruptions. How is the OCA responding?

The members of the Holy Synod are certainly aware of such rumors; as such, they wish to remind the faithful that we are the Church, and that the response to any disruptions will be handled in a Christian and churchly manner. People are free to express their views, but the Church does have business to address, and all are reminded to act respectfully in cases of disagreement. Those with further questions or issues in this regard are encouraged to speak to their parish priest or diocesan bishop.

17. Is there a preferred candidate at this time?

The Statute is very clear that there is to be no “previous discussion of names” (Article IV, Section 4a). Of course, delegates should prepare to vote through prayer and fasting. Page six of the Delegate Handbook offers helpful advice on how to prepare for the AAC.

18. Who is eligible to be a candidate?

Article IV, Section 4 of the Statute outlines the requirements for a candidate for the office of the Metropolitan, as set forth in Article VI, Section 9:

- The candidate for the office of diocesan bishop must satisfy all the requirements of the Holy Canons pertaining to this highest of all ecclesiastical offices. In addition, it is preferable that he have completed a course of study in a Graduate School of Orthodox Theology and that he be conversant in the English language.
- If he is not already a bishop, he can be nominated only from among the monastic or celibate clergy or laymen;
- If at the moment of his nomination he is a layman or a celibate or widowed priest, he shall pronounce at least the first monastic vows (*rasophoria*).

Also note that candidates, if they have not already been so, are to be vetted by the Holy Synod, including background checks and examinations as is the current practice of the Holy Synod.

19. What is the difference between the nomination and the election?

According to the Canons of the Church and the Statute of the OCA, bishops elect bishops. The clergy and laity nominate a candidate or candidates, whose name or names are presented to the Holy Synod for canonical election. If, on the first ballot, a candidate receives a 2/3 majority, his name is submitted to the Holy Synod for consideration. If the members of the Holy Synod do not accept the nominee, they must present their reasons to the AAC. If no one receives 2/3 of the votes on the first ballot, then there is a second ballot, after which the names of those receiving the highest and second highest number of votes are submitted to the Holy Synod for consideration and canonical election. The actual election occurs after the name or names are submitted to the Holy Synod, the members of which then proceed to vote in the altar. The vote is by secret

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ballot, with each active diocesan bishop writing a name on a piece of paper and placing it in a large chalice. The Secretary of the Holy Synod then tallies the votes. The bishops approach the person with the majority of votes and ask him to accept. If he does not, the process is repeated until the candidate accepts the office.

20. Where are the procedures specified for this AAC?

Please refer to the Delegate Handbook, which may be accessed on the OCA website at <http://files.oca.org/aacs/2012-0912-v3-delegate-handbook-17th.pdf>, for detailed instructions and procedures. There also is a dedicated button on the right side of the website's home page that links to a wealth of information about the 17th AAC.

21. What will happen after the election of a Metropolitan?

Immediately following the election, the new Metropolitan will be installed into the office, if he is already a bishop. If not, then other procedures will take place. He will be vested in the church with the symbols of his office by the bishops of the Church. Everyone will have a chance to hear him speak and to receive his blessing. He will immediately take up his duties.

He will be enthroned in Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Washington, DC in January 2013. The date and arrangements will be announced as they become available on the OCA website.