



**MINUTES  
of the Joint Meeting of the Standing Synod  
and the 2017 Spring Session of  
the Metropolitan Council**

**Tuesday, February 21 – Thursday, February 23, 2017  
Immaculate Conception Seminary, Huntington, NY**

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

**PARTICIPANTS**

**STANDING SYNOD**

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon  
His Eminence, Archbishop Michael

His Grace, Bishop Paul

**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  
Archpriest Antonio Perdomo  
Archpriest Thomas Moore

Maureen Jury  
Katherine Vitko  
Larry Skvir

**DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES**

**Diocese of Alaska**

Archpriest John Dunlop

Patrick Pletnikoff

**Albanian Archdiocese**

Archpriest Dennis Rhodes

**Bulgarian Diocese**

Priest Martin Watt

**Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania**

Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky

Susan Schlasta

**Diocese of the Midwest**

Archpriest Alexander Kuchta

Robert Graban

**Diocese of New England**

Priest James Parnell

David Zavednak

**Diocese of New York/New Jersey**

Igumen Joseph (Hoffman)

James P. Kornafel

**Diocese of the South**

Priest Joseph Lucas

**Diocese of Washington**

Priest Valery Shemchuk

Elizabeth Mikhalevsky

**Diocese of the West**

Archpriest John Dresko

*vacant*

**Diocese of Western Pennsylvania**

Priest Nikolai Breckenridge

Dr. John Schultz (*except Tuesday*)

**ABSENT**

His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin (*Standing Synod*)

Archpriest Anatoliy Melnyk (*Archdiocese of Canada*)

Deacon Nicolas Svetlovsky (*Archdiocese of Canada*)

Donna Dimitri (*Albanian Archdiocese*)

Martin Myers (*Bulgarian Diocese*)

Angela Parks, Esq. (*Diocese of the South*)

**GUESTS** (*for all sessions unless otherwise indicated*)

Protopresbyter Leonid Kishkovsky (*Director of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations*)

*– Wednesday afternoon*

Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak (*Secretary to the Metropolitan & Director, Stewards of the OCA*)

*– Wednesday afternoon*

Maureen Ahearn (*OCA Pension Plan Administrator – Thursday*)

Matushka Mary Buletza-Breton (*Pension Board Trustee – Thursday*)

Donna Karabin (*Chairperson, Department of Christian Service and Humanitarian Aid – Thursday*)

Judge E.R. Lanier (*OCA General Counsel*)

Alexis Liberovsky (*recording secretary*)

Matushka Valerie Zahirsky (*Chairperson, Department of Christian Education – Thursday*)

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2017**

Following the celebration of a Divine Liturgy at Saint Sergius Chapel at 8:00 AM, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon celebrated a prayer service at 11:04 AM on Tuesday morning to open the meeting at the Immaculate Conception Seminary.

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

The meeting was then called to order. Frs. John Jillions and Eric Tosi indicated minor clarifications to the agenda as to presenters, the sequence of agenda items and requested its approval.

**A.1. MOTION ZAVEDNAK/GRABAN – To approve the agenda for this meeting as presented. 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 noted the absence of Archbishop Benjamin due to the funeral for his aunt, as well as Donna Dimitri and Angela Parks because of health issues. He announced that Wesley Smith, who had been the lay representative on the Council from the Diocese of the West, has resigned due to his relocation to the Washington, DC area. He requested approval of Alexis Liberovsky 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 September 20-22, 2016 for approval.

**B.1. MOTION PARNELL/BRECKENRIDGE – To accept the previous meeting minutes of September 20-22, 2016 as presented. CARRIED.**

**C. Welcome**

Metropolitan Tikhon welcomed everyone present for the meeting, including the members of the Standing Synod in attendance and noted the absence of Archbishop Benjamin in order to attend his aunt's funeral. He also extended a particular welcome to the new members of the Council. He then expressed gratitude to Wesley Smith, who has resigned from the Council due to his relocation to the Archdiocese of Washington.

**D. Metropolitan's Report**

Metropolitan Tikhon presented an oral report. Noting the upcoming fifth anniversary of his election as Primate, he indicated that he considers the past five years as a period of transition, which is now completed. He went on to speak of the relative peace in the Church, which now allows for a more proactive and forward-looking vision, in part through the Four Pillars of the Guiding Framework. He then suggested a proposed timeline for dialogue and communication as a path to implementation of the Four Pillars between now and the All-American Council next year. He also presented the attached prioritized list from the brainstorming session on the Four Pillars conducted during the Metropolitan Council meeting last September. He delineated the various roles in this process that are and will be undertaken by himself, the Holy Synod, the All-American Council and the chancery staff. He also read his preliminary introduction to the first two pillars and solicited input for completing it to include all Four Pillars. He then introduced the attached proposed monthly sequence of presenting the Four Pillars and their subthemes over the next year. Questions and extensive discussion ensued.

Following a recess for lunch at 12:31 PM, the afternoon session was called to order at 1:34 PM.

**G. Chancellor's Report (attached)**

Fr. John Jillions highlighted his attached written report and appendices. He particularly noted the work of the Department of Pastoral Life to revise the Guidelines for Clergy, issued by the Holy Synod some 20 years ago as well as revision of the OCA Clergy Compensation Guidelines. He underscored the success of the recent annual meeting of diocesan chancellors and treasurers.

**G.1. ORSMA**

Fr. Jillions highlighted the confidential report from the Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations (ORSMA), which included case statistics and coordinator activities. He noted the success of the new background check process through Protect My Ministry (PMM). Fr. Tosi provided further details.

## **G.2. SMPAC**

Fr. Jillions presented the confidential report from the Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee (SMPAC). Judge Lanier provided further perspective and information. Questions and discussion ensued particularly concerning background checks.

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

Fr. Eric Tosi presented his attached written report with attachments and introduced for approval a *CORPORATE GIFT POLICY OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA*. Questions and discussion ensued.

### **H.1. MOTION PARNELL/WATT – To approve as presented the following *CORPORATE GIFT POLICY OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA*.**

#### **PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

The Orthodox Church in America, a religious corporation established under the laws of the State of New York, hereby establishes this uniform policy to inform church employees of the prohibitions established by the Holy Synod against soliciting or receiving corporate gifts. This policy has application to the employees of the Chancery Office of the Orthodox Church in America, exclusive of the employees of the Dioceses, Parishes, and Stavropegial Institutions of the Church. This policy shall not affect the authority of officers, agents, or employees of the Orthodox Church in America to accept gifts, donations, or bequests on behalf of the Church at large in furtherance of the religious and ecclesiastical purposes of the Orthodox Church in America.

#### **DEFINITIONS**

- “A Thing of Value” shall include any gift, benefit, favor, service, gratuity, reward, promise, honoraria or other item of monetary value.
- “De Minimis” is a value of twenty-five dollars (\$25) or less per occasion, and an aggregate of fifty dollars (\$50) or less in a single calendar year.
- “Employees” include all permanent, part-time, temporary and contract employees, including volunteers, of the Orthodox Church in America.

#### **POLICY**

- No Church Officer, Agent or Employee, nor any family member of a Church Officer, Agent or Employee, shall solicit or receive a thing of value in connection with their service to the Orthodox Church in America.
- No person shall offer or give to a Church Officer, Agent or Employee, or to a family member of a Church Officer Agent or Employee, a thing of value for the purpose of influencing official Church action.
- If a Church Officer, Agent or Employee is offered a thing of value governed by this policy, such offer shall be declined, with reference to this policy.
- If a Church Officer, Agent or Employee receives a thing of value governed by this policy, the thing of value shall be returned, with reference to this policy.
- If an anonymous thing of value is received by a Church Officer, Agent, or Employee, the gift shall be delivered to the Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church in America, who shall then convey the thing of value to a charitable organization.
- The Church Officers, Agents and Employees shall publish this policy to the public, vendors, contractors and others doing business with the Church.

## EXCEPTIONS

- A Church Officer, Agent or Employee may accept food items of de minimis value when such items are to be shared with the other Officers, Agents, or employees of the Church.
- A Church Officer, Agent, or Employee may accept gifts of a religious character or significance which are customarily exchanged between or among officers, agents, or employees of religious bodies maintaining relations with the Orthodox Church in America.
- A Church Officer, Agent or Employee may accept any item which may be displayed in public areas belonging to the Orthodox Church in America (such as flowers or religious art).
- A Church Officer, Agent or Employee may accept handmade items from children under sixteen years of age.
- This policy shall not preclude the payment of or reimbursement for actual and necessary transportation and lodging expenses for Church Officers, Agents or Employees engaged in Church business. CARRIED with 1 abstention (PERDOMO).

Fr. Tosi then asked Judge Lanier to introduce for approval a *RESOLUTION GRANTING SIGNING AND AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT BUSINESS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA*.

### H.2. MOTION JURY/DRESKO – To approve as presented the following *RESOLUTION GRANTING SIGNING AND AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT BUSINESS OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA*.

WHEREAS, the Orthodox Church in America desires to grant signing and general business authority to certain persons described hereunder; and  
WHEREAS, the Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church in America has that corporate authority granted to him under Article IV of the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America; and  
WHEREAS, the Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America; the Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America; and the Treasurer of the Orthodox Church in America have that corporate authority granted to them under Article VI of the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America hereby authorizes and approves the grant of signing and authority to conduct business of the Orthodox Church in America to each and every of the following Officers of the Church:

- The Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church in America;
- The Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America;
- The Secretary the Orthodox Church in America; and
- The Treasurer of the Orthodox Church in America.

The foregoing signing and authority granted hereby shall include, but shall not be limited to, the Receipt of funds properly owing to the Orthodox Church in America and the execution of deeds, powers of attorney, transfers, assignments, contracts, obligations, certificates, and other instruments of whatever nature entered into by the Orthodox Church in America. CARRIED.

Fr. Tosi then presented a written estimate of \$20,000 for roof repairs on the Chancery building that includes removal of solar panels that are no longer used and new shingles on the central section of the roof. Payment for the new roof will be through a recent bequest that covers the cost. Questions and discussions ensued.

### H.3. MOTION DRESKO/BRECKENRIDGE – To approve funding of roof repairs for the OCA Chancery building at the discretion of the Treasurer. CARRIED.

Fr. Tosi presented preliminary plans for extensive remediation measures in the basement facilities of the OCA Archives, as was recommended by consultants last year in their *ARCHIVES FACILITIES CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT* report and subsequently comprehensively discussed at the recent meeting of the Archives Advisory Committee. He indicated that the Committee has investigated possible relocation of the Archives but the proposed venues are not appropriate. Melanie Ringa indicated that the donor of the McGuire Family Charitable Remainder Trust designated for preservation of the OCA Archives has passed away and that disbursement of its proceeds of over \$200,000 is anticipated as soon as all related formalities are completed. She stated that funding for remediation measures in the current facilities is consistent with the terms of the McGuire Family Charitable Remainder Trust. After extensive discussion, it was agreed that a resolution be prepared to approve funding for extensive remediation measures in the facilities of the OCA Archives from the proceeds of the McGuire Family Charitable Remainder Trust.

Fr. Tosi then briefly reported on the redesign of the OCA website, which is nearing completion.

Following a short recess at 3:46 PM, the session resumed at 4:02 PM.

#### **H.4. Archives Advisory Committee (attached)**

Alexis Liberovsky, Committee Secretary and OCA Archivist, briefly summarized the attached written report from the Committee, particularly noting its fruitful meeting in late November and the repose of its chairman, Alexis Troubetzkoy, in January. He also announced that with the consensus of Committee members, His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon has appointed Matushka Tamara Skvir as the new chairperson of the Committee.

#### **H.5. 19<sup>th</sup> All-American Council (attached)**

Fr. Tosi then highlighted his attached report on preparations for the 19th All-American Council scheduled for July 2018 with the attached PowerPoint presentation. He presented recommendations for the Council theme and logo, which will be presented to the Holy Synod in March for final approval. Questions and discussion ensued.

The day's sessions were adjourned with prayer at 4:38 PM and were followed by committee meetings.

### **WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2017**

The morning session was opened with prayer at 9:02 AM.

#### **I. Legal matters (attached)**

In the absence of Angela Parks, Legal Committee chairperson, Judge E.R. Lanier, OCA General Counsel, presented the attached report from the Legal Committee. He provided details on the settlement reached with Bishop Matthias (Moriak) and indicated that after insurance coverage the total remaining liability of the Church in the case is \$10,000.

##### **I.1. MOTION DRESKO/PARNELL – To confirm and ratify the expenditure of \$10,000 (ten thousand dollars) for settlement of the lawsuit by Bishop Matthias (Moriak). CARRIED.**

Judge Lanier then reported on the various delays and complications regarding land transfers of property belonging to St. Tikhon's Orphanage in South Canaan, PA. He indicated that the new OCA Statute must be fully implemented by the end of 2017 and reported on strategic efforts to accomplish this implementation throughout the Church. Hierarchs and Metropolitan Council members described implementation efforts in their dioceses. A variety of legal issues was extensively discussed. Metropolitan Tikhon expressed profound thanks to Judge Lanier and the Legal Committee for their work.

Following a short recess at 10:35 AM, the session resumed at 10:55 AM.

**K. Metropolitan Council Committees**

**K.1. Charity (attached)**

Archpriest Alexander Kuchta, Committee Chairman, summarized the Committee's attached report.

**K.2. Ethics**

Archpriest Thomas Moore, Committee Chairman, indicated that the Committee has nothing to report at this time.

**K.3. Human Resources**

Elizabeth Mikhalevsky, Committee Chairperson, reported that with direction from His Beatitude, the Committee has met and indicated that proposals for the reorganization of the chancery structure are progressing. While job descriptions for senior staff remain the priority, other areas of focus are organizational structure and chain of command. At His Beatitude's request, a draft will be prepared for his presentation to the March meeting of the Holy Synod.

**K.4. Internal Governance (attached)**

Archpriest Chad Hatfield, Committee Chairman, presented the attached letter of engagement as external auditor with D'Arcangelo & Co., LLP.

**K.4.A. MOTION GRABAN/WATT – To accept the letter of engagement with D'Arcangelo & Co., LLP. CARRIED.**

A wide-ranging discussion took place concerning the structure and time management of Metropolitan Council meetings, including its annual retreat. It was suggested that the retreat be considered as an educational feature. It was agreed that the educational session preceding the meeting should focus on OCA history, specifically on the granting of autocephaly, in view of the upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this event.

**L. Treasurer's Report (attached)**

Melanie Ringa highlighted the attached Treasurer's report, which included preliminary 2016 financial results, noting the success of the transition to proportional giving. She particularly noted increases in contributions from the non-territorial dioceses. She indicated the goal to cover department expenses from SOCA contributions. She expressed satisfaction with the recent diocesan chancellors and treasurers meeting and pointed to the value of these annual meetings in developing financial giving structure throughout the Church. She stated that she would be working with Larry Skvir to develop endowment policies for presentation to the Council in the fall.

Following up on the previous day's discussion on funding remediation measures in the current facilities of the OCA Archives, she presented the following resolution.

**L.1. MOTION RINGA/MIKHALEVSKY – Resolved, that it is the consensus of the Metropolitan Council of the Orthodox Church in America that certain funds of the estate of John McGuire, deceased, of Adrian, Missouri, now held by Wells-Fargo Bank in Summit, New Jersey, be dedicated to the use of the Archives Committee of the Orthodox Church in America for the preservation of records and artifacts of the**

**Church at such time as said funds are distributed to and received by the Orthodox Church in America. CARRIED.**

Following a recess for lunch at 12:30 PM, the afternoon session was called to order at 1:36 PM.

**M. Finance/Investment Committee**

Archpriest John Dresko, Finance/Investment Committee Chairman, also noted the productive and fruitful meeting of diocesan chancellors and treasurers. He indicated that the Finance/Investment Committee is developing an investment policy. He suggested that the term “assessments” should no longer be used in reference to financial contributions from dioceses. He stated that the issue of financial obligations of employees for medical insurance is being studied. In view of the current improved financial status of the OCA, and as there have been no salary increases in many years, he proposed the following resolution for a modest salary increase for chancery employees.

- M.1. MOTION DRESKO/MIKHALEVSKY - To approve a 2% salary increase for all chancery employees retroactive to January 1, 2017. CARRIED with 4 abstentions (METROPOLITAN TIKHON, JILLIONS, TOSI, RINGA).**

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

Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak, Director of the Stewards of the Orthodox Church in America (SOCA) highlighted his attached report. He acknowledged that fundraising goals for 2016 were not met, but expressed confidence that goals for 2017 can be achieved. He particularly noted SOCA’s logo, its partnership appeal with FOCUS and the need to foster the OCA identity through storytelling projects, as well as SOCA efforts to work more closely with OCA departments. The expediency of a single day SOCA church-wide appeal was discussed. A video of the Metropolitan’s recent visit to Mexico, that included an inspiring interview with a Mexican youth, was shown and discussed in terms of possible support. Further questions and discussion ensued.

**O. External Affairs Report**

Protopresbyter Leonid Kishkovsky, Director of External Affairs and Interchurch Relations, delivered an oral report on the various activities of the Orthodox Church in America in contacts with other Orthodox Churches, non-Orthodox bodies, government officials and other organizations. He particularly highlighted the travels of Metropolitan Tikhon and other OCA hierarchs to Russia and elsewhere. He reported on his own work and travels as acting OCA Representative to the Moscow Patriarchate since the death of Archimandrite Alexander (Pihach) last fall. He also shared some perspectives on the Council in Crete last June

Archpriest Alexander Kuchta delivered a report on his attendance of a recent emergency meeting in Chicago of Church World Service (CWS) in response to the President’s Executive Order in January limiting foreign entry into the United States and related refugee issues. Fr. Kuchta then proposed the following resolution. After discussion, the question was called.

- O.1. MOTION KUCHTA/PARNELL – To contribute \$1000 (one thousand dollars) to Church World Service for refugee resettlement.**

It was pointed out that the Orthodox Church in America makes an annual contribution to CWS. After further consideration of all possible implications of the previous motion, it was decided to table it.

- O.2. MOTION DRESKO/RHODES – To table the previous motion. CARRIED with 1 opposed (KUCHTA) and 2 abstentions (PARNELL, MOORE).**

Following a short recess at 4:01 PM, the session resumed at 4:21 PM.

**P. Guiding Framework and open discussion**

Metropolitan Tikhon led a wide-ranging discussion pertaining to the Guiding Framework, the effectiveness of the Metropolitan Council and other issues.

The day's sessions were adjourned with prayer at 4:54 PM

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2017**

The morning session was opened with prayer at 9:06 AM. Metropolitan Tikhon read the chapter titled "*Ministry in Society*" from *The Orthodox Pastor* by Archbishop John (Shahovskoy).

**T. Department Reports**

**T.1. Christian Education (attached)**

Matushka Valerie Zahirsky supplemented the Department's attached report with the attached PowerPoint presentation. She particularly highlighted ongoing work on *Study and Review Questions and Answers* for the new edition of Fr. Thomas Hopko's *The Orthodox Faith Series* as well as various tools developed for teaching about saints at various levels. She noted the Department's participation in the Orthodox Christian Education Commission (OCEC) and cooperative projects with other jurisdictions. Questions and discussion ensued.

**T.2. Christian Service and Humanitarian Aid (attached)**

Donna Karabin supplemented the Department's attached report with the attached PowerPoint presentation. She particularly highlighted the Department's recent meeting, the Parish Ministry Resources (PMR) on the OCA website and the Compassion in Action (CiA) parish ministry training program. She noted that a Parish Ministries Conference is being planned for this year. Questions and discussion ensued.

Following a short recess at 10:43 AM, the session resumed at 11:16 AM.

**S. Pension Board Report (attached)**

Matushka Mary Buletza-Breton, a Pension Board member, presented the attached report on the OCA Pension Plan. She and Maureen Ahearn, Pension Plan Administrator, answered questions on various issues and provided clarifications. They indicated that the possibility of a policy for retired priests to serve older parishes, similar to the adopted Mission Parish Priest Retirement Benefits Policy continues to be explored.

**W. Adjournment**

In concluding remarks, Metropolitan Tikhon thanked Council members for a productive meeting.

**W.1. MOTION WATT/MIKHALEVSKY – To adjourn the meeting. CARRIED.**

The meeting was adjourned with prayer at 12:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexis Liberovsky,  
Recording Secretary