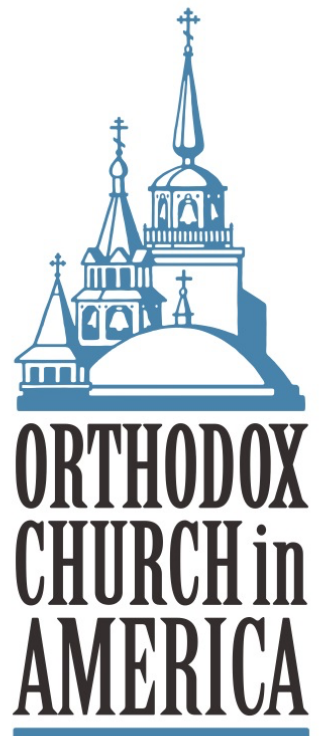


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# METROPOLITAN COUNCIL of the ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

MINUTES  
2024 Fall Session

Wednesday, October 9 – Friday, October 11, 2024  
Hilton Springfield, Springfield, Virginia



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

**PARTICIPANTS**

**CHAIRMAN**

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon

**CHURCH OFFICERS (*EX OFFICIO*)**

Archpriest Alexander Rentel, *Chancellor*  
Andrew Smith, *Treasurer*

Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino, *Secretary*

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

Archpriest Justin Patterson  
Archpriest Lawrence Margitich  
Archpriest Christopher Foley

Elizabeth Mikhalevsky  
Lynnell McFarland (*Wednesday only*)  
Alexis Liberovsky

**DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES**

**Diocese of Alaska**

Archpriest Maxim Isaac

Anthony Lekanof

**Albanian Archdiocese**

Hieromonk Danaks (Rhodes)

Donna Dimitri

**Bulgarian Diocese**

Deacon Bogdan Popescu

Daniel Ralich

**Archdiocese of Canada**

Archpriest Gregory Scratch

Jonathan Pageau

**Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania**

Archpriest Nicholas Solak

Danalisa Radu

**Diocese of the Midwest**

Archpriest John Baker

Basil Kochan

**Diocese of New York/New Jersey**

Archpriest David Garretson

Mitchell VanDuyn

**Diocese of the South**

Joshua Godbold

**Archdiocese of Washington**

Deacon Matthew Prentice

Gregory Honshul

**Diocese of the West**

David Lane, Esq.

**Diocese of Western Pennsylvania**

Priest John Parker

Ray Steeb

**ABSENT** *(for all meetings unless otherwise indicated)*

Archpriest Patrick Burns *(Diocese of New England)*

Archpriest Joseph Ciarciaglino *(Diocese of the South)*

Archpriest Matthew Tate *(Diocese of the West)*

David Zavednak *(Diocese of New England)*

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

Archpriest John Dresko *(OCA Pension Board Trustee) – Thursday*

Archpriest Thomas Soroka *(Project Manager for the OCA Departments) – Thursday*

Stephanie Crocenzi, CPA *(external auditor from Satty, Levine & Ciacco, CPAs, P.C.)*

*– Friday, via Zoom*

Mark Hamilton *(OCA General Counsel) – Friday, via zoom*

Michael G. Herzak *(President, Insurance Systems) – Thursday*

Kevin McMaster *(Insurance Consultant) – Thursday*

Melanie Ringa *(OCA Pension Board Trustee) – Thursday*

Michael Stieglitz *(Administrator, OCA Pension Plan) – Thursday*

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2024**

**A. Opening Prayer**

Following the celebration of a Divine Liturgy for the feast of St. Tikhon of Moscow and North America at St. Nicholas Primatial Cathedral in Washington, DC at 8:30 AM, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon opened the meeting with prayer at 12:02 PM at the Hilton Hotel in Springfield, VA.

**B. Call to Order**

With His Beatitude’s blessing, Archpriest Alexander Rentel called the meeting to order. He noted that today is the name day of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon and wished him many years.

**C. Agenda (attached) Introduction & Roll Call**

Fr. Rentel reviewed the attached agenda for the meeting and conducted the roll call, indicating guests who would be in attendance at the 2024 Fall Session.

**D. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meetings**

Fr. Rentel presented for approval the draft minutes of the 2024 Special Session of the Metropolitan Council conducted by video conference on January 24, 2024 and the draft minutes of the regular 2024 Spring Session of the Metropolitan Council conducted by video conference on March 5, March 7 and March 28, 2024, which were approved by consensus as presented. Joshua Godbold stated that not all

the reports concerning the Pension Plan were posted online with the meeting minutes as mandated by the All-American Council.

**E. New Business**

Fr. Rentel presented two resolutions for consideration by the Council.

- E.1. MOTION RENTEL/LANE – To affirm profound collegial appreciation of the Metropolitan Council and warm love in Christ for Archbishop Matthew Tate; to express the Council’s sorrow over his present illness; and to assure him of fervent prayers to God, whose “hands heal” (Job 5:18), that he might receive from above all that is good and saving in both soul and body. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Father Rentel noted that His Beatitude would personally deliver this resolution and the well wishes of the Council to Fr. Matthew when he travels to attend the upcoming Assembly of the Diocese of the West.

- E.2. MOTION RENTEL/LIBEROVSKY – To express the concern of the Metropolitan Council for the communities of the Orthodox Church in America and for all the people of Florida threatened by Hurricane Milton, and to assure them of the Council’s prayer to Christ, “whom wind and sea obey” (Lk. 8:25), that He would graciously have mercy on those in the path of the hurricane and preserve life and property from the rage of the storm. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**F. Metropolitan’s Report (attached)**

Metropolitan Tikhon presented oral remarks along with the attached log of his travel and events as Primate since the Spring Session. He reported on his Primatial activities, events of church-wide significance, his work with stavropegial institutions, international travel, his archpastoral work in the Archdiocese of Washington, and the relocation of the Chancery office. In light of his call for reflection for the upcoming 21<sup>st</sup> All-American Council, His Beatitude offered some of his own considerations on the current moment in the life of the Orthodox Church in America. Extensive discussion took place and His Beatitude responded to questions from Council members.

Following a break at 1:57 PM, the meeting resumed at 2:17 PM.

**G. Chancellor’s Report (attached)**

Fr. Rentel presented his attached report, highlighting his various activities, the work of the Chancery, and other business. Father Alexander also reported on his recent travel, both domestic and international. He especially noted the work of the Preconciliar Commission and other preparations for the 21<sup>st</sup> All-American Council. He also spoke of personnel matters and the projected expansion of the Office of Pastoral Life. Additionally, he indicated that among the final steps in the Chancery relocation will be his own move to greater DC by January 2025. In discussion, it was decided to table for later consideration a proposed resolution to acknowledge and approve the Metropolitan’s trip to Ukraine, Romania and Constantinople.

## **H. Report of the Secretary (attached)**

Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino highlighted some of the sections of his attached report reflecting on the everyday operation at the Chancery in Virginia, and shared some of his considerations on the necessary steps for the gradual integration of the Chancery within the territory of the Archdiocese of Washington. He also reported on the work of the Preconciliar Commission and the ongoing planning of the 21<sup>st</sup> All-American Council. He proposed for membership in the Preconciliar Commission the names of Matushka Ashley Foster as youth coordinator, as well as Deacon John Weiss and Lydia Osolinsky as clergy and lay co-chairs of the Local Organizing Committee.

### **H.1. MOTION MARGHERITINO/PATTERSON - To submit to the Holy Synod the names of Deacon John Weiss, Lydia Osolinsky and Matushka Ashley Foster to be added to the roster of the Preconciliar Commission for the 21<sup>st</sup> All-American Council. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Father Alessandro also gave an update on the Archives of the Orthodox Church in America, now largely relocated to Saint Vladimir's Seminary in Yonkers, NY, and preparations for the upcoming closing of the sale of the Westwood property.

## **I. Property Committee (attached)**

Gregory Honshul and Ray Steeb presented the attached report updating the Council on progress regarding the Westwood sale, noting that the approval processes following the signing of the purchase agreement several months ago are proceeding as expected. Barring any unforeseen complications, the closing is anticipated to occur by the end of 2025. The report and related issues were discussed in detail.

After brief closing remarks from His Beatitude, the meeting was concluded with prayer at 4:28 PM.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2024**

## **J. Pension Board (attached)**

Fr. John Dresko and Melanie Ringa (Pension Board members) presented the Board's extensive reports on the Pension Plan with attachments, providing the Council with updates on Pension Plan membership, compliance status, and investment performance. Additionally, the Pension Committee of the Metropolitan Council presented its own report. A wide-ranging discussion took place. Michael Stieglitz, OCA Pension Plan Administrator, was also present and provided clarifications and details on the work of the Pension Office. David Lane, outgoing Council liaison to the Pension Board, noted the vast improvement in the relationship between the two bodies over the last two years and the greater openness and accountability regarding Pension finances.

After a brief recess at 10:26 AM, the meeting resumed.

## **K. Church Planting Grants (attached)**

Archpriest Thomas Soroka, Project Manager for the OCA Departments, presenting key issues in the attached report on the work of the departments, spoke on the need to restructure the Church Planting

Grant Program and discussion of this issue by an ad hoc committee exploring potential expansion of the Church Planting Grants Program and the possible institution of new programs. Extensive deliberation by the Council took place resulting in the following resolution.

- K.1. MOTION POPESCU/RHODES – To pause for up to one year the granting of first-year Church Planting Grants in order to allow time for restructuring of the program, possible development of new programs and enhancement of funding sources. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Fr. Thomas then informed the Council of the upcoming release of a new comprehensive school-age curriculum by the Department of Christian Education based on “*Essential Orthodox Christian Beliefs*,” the adult catechetical resource released last year. He highlighted the work of other Departments, as presented in the attached report.

The Council then approved a resolution to accept the recommendations of the Department of Evangelization for second and third year planting grant recipients in 2025 and to submit them to the Holy Synod for confirmation.

- K.2. MOTION POPESCU/FOLEY - To approve the recommendations of one second-year Mission Planting Grant for St Alexis of Wilkes-Barre Mission in Palm Coast, FL, and two third-year Mission Planting Grants for St. Ambrose of Milan Mission in Roanoke, VA and Archangel Gabriel Mission in Hickory, NC, totaling \$80,000. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The Council expressed its appreciation to Fr. Thomas for his work in overseeing the OCA Departments.

**L. Office of Pastoral Life (attached)**

Archpriest Nicholas Solak, chair of the Office of Pastoral Life and a member of the Metropolitan Council, presented his report and other documents on the various programs managed by the Office. He particularly emphasized the programs now available as a result of two significant grants awarded by the Lilly Foundation. Father Nicholas also presented a plan for the expansion of the Office of Pastoral Life in light of the continuous growth of the programs. After extensive discussion of various logistical, financial, legal and other aspects of the proposed plan, the following resolution was proposed.

- L.1. MOTION LANE/LEKANOF – To adopt the following resolution on the transition of the Chair of the Office of Pastoral Life to Full-Time Director:**

**WHEREAS, the Office of Pastoral Life ("OPL") plays a critical role within the Chancery of the Orthodox Church in America ("OCA") by supporting clergy in their vocation through resources promoting personal, spiritual, and educational growth and health;**

**WHEREAS, OPL is building capacity to raise funds in order to sustain and expand its programs and operations, including support for core staff and non-Lilly funded initiatives;**

**WHEREAS, OPL's work, under the Omophorion of the Primate and in collaboration with the Holy Synod, diocesan bishops, and other church offices, ensures the well-being and effectiveness of the Church's pastoral ministry across all dioceses;**

**WHEREAS, the OPL is integral to the OCA's efforts to foster healthy spiritual leaders, responding to clergy challenges with support in areas such as mental, physical, and spiritual health, financial planning, and family well-being;**

**WHEREAS, OPL administers several key programs, including the Thriving in Ministry Program, Financial Health Initiative, Synaxis Program, Clergy Wives Group, and National Clergy Retreat, contributing to the personal and professional growth of clergy;**

**WHEREAS, sustainable leadership and consistent management are critical to OPL's ability to fulfill its mission and expand its programs to meet the needs of clergy and clergy families throughout the OCA;**

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED:**

**The Orthodox Church in America's Metropolitan Council recommends the transition of the current Chair of the Office of Pastoral Life to the role of Full-Time Director of the Office of Pastoral Life;**

**BE IT THEREFORE FURTHER RESOLVED:**

**In order to fulfill its mission and strategy, the OPL requires the establishment of full-time salaried positions for a Director of Operations and a Director of Development to ensure the ongoing efficiency, growth, and financial sustainability of the Office of Pastoral Life.**

**BE IT THEREFORE FURTHER RESOLVED:**

**The Full-Time Director will oversee the development and implementation of all OPL programs and initiatives, maintain close collaboration with the Chancery, diocesan leadership, and the Holy Synod, and ensure that OPL's activities align with the strategic objectives of the OCA;**

**BE IT THEREFORE FINALLY RESOLVED:**

**The Metropolitan Council, per the Operational Plan established by the OCA, which outlines the roles, responsibilities, and expectations governing OPL, supports the allocation of the necessary resources, with the understanding that OPL intends to become fully financially self-sustaining, ensuring the long-term success and growth of the Office of Pastoral Life under its Full-Time Director.**

In discussion of this resolution, a motion was made by Joshua Godbold to table the resolution for further consideration the following day after adoption of the budget. The motion to table failed as it did not receive the required 2/3 majority vote. After further discussion of various aspects of the resolution, a motion to call the question by Lisa Mikhalevsky received the required 2/3 majority vote. Therefore, a roll call vote was conducted on Motion L.1. with minor typographical correction incorporated into the text above.

**CARRIED with 23 (twenty-three) votes in favor, 1 (one) vote opposed (Steeb) and 4 (four) abstentions (Godbold, Parker, Prentice, Ralich).**

Metropolitan Tikhon indicated that he would convey this Council resolution to the Holy Synod for its consideration and final approval.

Following a break for lunch at 12:37 PM, the meeting resumed at 1:47 PM

**M. Term Life Insurance Program Presentation**

A new and voluntary term life insurance program to be offered to all clergy and lay employees of the Church by Insurance Systems of Independence, OH - the insurance broker that supports the Orthodox Church in America's Central Administration for its various insurance needs - was presented to the Council by Michael Herzak and Kevin McMaster. After questions and discussion, the following resolution was proposed.

- M.1. MOTION RENTEL/MIKHALEVSKY – To receive the informational presentation on life insurance options and to refer it to the Holy Synod for further consideration. CARRIED with 2 (two) votes opposed (Dimitri, Godbold) and 1 abstention (Patterson).**

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

Andrew Smith highlighted the attached Treasurer's report and appendices that provided an overview of the Church's finances and investments. He proposed the following resolution regarding the budget for the forthcoming 21<sup>st</sup> All-American Council and diocesan contributions, developed with input from the Finance Committee, Preconciliar Commission as well as Diocesan Chancellors and Treasurers.

- N.1. MOTION SMITH/LEKANOF – To adopt the following resolution**  
**WHEREAS, All-American Council Manager (AAC) PDn. Peter Ilchuk and OCA Treasurer Andrew Smith have worked with AAC constituents and vendors to draft an AAC budget; and,**  
**WHEREAS, diocesan contributions to the AAC are calculated in a manner consistent with the funding resolution adopted at the last AAC wherein contributions are tied to diocesan net operating budgets; and,**  
**WHEREAS, the Finance Committee of the Metropolitan Council, the Preconciliar Commission, and OCA Diocesan Chancellors and Treasurers have reviewed and have been given the opportunity to comment on the budget and corresponding proposed diocesan contributions; and,**  
**WHEREAS, diocesan contributions are needed by the end of the first quarter of 2025 to ensure adequate cash flow for AAC vendor management,**  
**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED:**  
**The Metropolitan Council adopts the 2025 All-American Council budget and the diocesan contributions outlined therein, establishing March 1, 2025 as the due date for diocesan contributions. CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Andrew Smith then presented the proposed 2025 budget with revisions incorporating the changes for the Office of Pastoral Life. In lengthy deliberation of the budget, the Council returned to the previous day's discussion following the Metropolitan's report on membership dues for the Assembly of Bishops. The effectiveness of the work of the Assembly of Bishops was discussed in detail. The following resolution was then proposed.



- N.2. MOTION GARRETSON/VANDUYN – In the budgeting process, the Metropolitan Council authorizes a membership contribution of the Orthodox Church in America to the Assembly of Bishops of up to \$25,000 (twenty-five thousand) for 2025, at the discretion of the Metropolitan. CARRIED with 12 (twelve) votes in favor, 8 (eight) votes opposed, 6 (six) abstentions.**

Metropolitan Tikhon indicated that he would convey this resolution to the Holy Synod for its further consideration.

Andrew Smith then submitted for the Council’s vote the amended 2025 budget incorporating revisions for both the Office of Pastoral Life and the Assembly of Bishops.

- N.3. MOTION SMITH/LEKANOF – To approve the amended budget of the Orthodox Church for 2025 as presented. CARRIED with 1 (one) vote opposed (Godbold) and 1 abstention (Scratch).**
- N.4. MOTION SMITH/GARRETSON – To approve housing allowance amounts within budgeted compensation for clergy employed by the OCA Chancery, as presented by the Treasurer in Appendix A of the 2025 budget proposal. CARRIED with 1 (one) abstention.**

Fr. Nicholas Solak thanked the Council for its support for the work of the Office of Pastoral Life.

After an exhortation for Council members to think overnight about the call for reflections for the 21st All-American Council in anticipation of tomorrow’s discussion, Metropolitan Tikhon closed the meeting with prayer at 4:52 PM.

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2024**

Fr. Rentel called the meeting to order at 9:02 AM, reviewed the revised agenda and schedule for the day, and conducted the roll call. He indicated guests who would be present during today’s deliberations.

**O. Legal matters**

- O.1. MOTION RENTEL/LEKANOF – To move into executive session. CARRIED.**

In executive session, Mark Hamilton, OCA General Counsel, participating by Zoom, presented his report to the Metropolitan Council regarding current and pending legal matters affecting the Church. Questions and discussion ensued.

- O.2. MOTION RENTEL/LEKANOF - To move out of executive session. CARRIED.**

Joshua Godbold initiated a discussion with Mark Hamilton and the Council on the transparency of Pension documents and reports. After hearing the legal perspective from Mark Hamilton, it was suggested that the Pension Committee would formulate a policy on this that would be proposed as a

resolution at the next meeting of the Council. Metropolitan Tikhon then appointed Fr. Alessandro Margheritino as temporary liaison of the Metropolitan Council to the Pension Board.

**P. External Audit (attached)**

Andrew Smith introduced Stephanie Crocenzi, CPA, a representative from Satty, Levine & Ciacco, CPAs, P.C., the external auditing firm for the OCA. Participating by Zoom, she delivered a PowerPoint presentation with the attached detailed overview of financial statements and the recent audit for 2023 conducted by Satty, Levine & Ciacco, CPAs, P.C., noting the audit’s key findings and the healthy financial state of the Church. She also addressed questions from Council members. Andrew Smith then proposed the following resolution of acceptance of the external audit.

**P.1. MOTION SMITH/DIMITRI –**

**WHEREAS, Satty, Levine, and Ciacco, CPAs, P.C., (Satty & Partners) has audited the financial records of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) for the year ended December 31, 2023; and,**

**WHEREAS, Satty & Partners has produced draft financial statements with an unqualified opinion, noting that the “financial statements... present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Orthodox Church in America as of December 31, 2023...”; and,**

**WHEREAS, Satty & Partners has presented these financial statements and their opinion to the Metropolitan Council on October 10, 2024,**

**BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED:**

**The Metropolitan Council accepts the results of the 2023 audit and authorizes the Chancellor to sign the Management Representation Letter for final issuance of the 2023 financial statements. CARRIED with 1 (one) abstention (Ralich).**

**Q. Other Business**

Fr. Rentel announced the following statement from the Metropolitan Council, drafted by David Lane, outgoing Legal Committee Chairperson, on the decisions made today in the executive session.

*“We had an executive session to discuss legal matters. During that executive session, the Metropolitan Council approved the settlement of one case and confirmed the actions of the administration in that case.*

*The Metropolitan Council also authorized our attorneys to enter into settlement negotiations within certain parameters on another case.”*

Fr. Rentel proposed that the Council’s 2025 Spring Session take place by video conference on February 25 and February 27, 2025 and that the 2025 Fall Session be scheduled in Springfield, Virginia on October 8 and 9, 2025. A general discussion on meeting format and agendas took place.

**R. Reflections for the 21<sup>st</sup> All-American Council**

The Council then engaged in a discussion prompted by Metropolitan Tikhon’s call for reflection on the Church’s current state, focusing on both the opportunities and challenges the Church faces in advance of the upcoming 21<sup>st</sup> All-American Council.

**S. Adjournment**

In concluding remarks, Metropolitan Tikhon reflected on some of his experiences as a monk and our need to work in humility, patience, and love. He thanked Council members for their work and prayers. He then closed the meeting and adjourned the Fall Session with prayer at 12:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alexis Liberovsky,  
Recording Secretary