

Minutes
2007 Assembly, Miami, Florida
Diocese of the South, Orthodox Church in America
July 17-19, 2007

Plenary 1

The 1st Plenary Session of the 2007 Diocesan Assembly opened on Thursday at 9:50 am with the singing of “O Heavenly King...”

Appointed by His Eminence Archbishop Dmitri:
Presidium: Mr. Gary Popovich
Secretariat: Archpriest Basil Zebrun

Archbishop's Opening Remarks: The Archbishop welcomed all those present, stressing that it is difficult to believe that this is now the 30th Assembly convened by our Diocese. His Eminence highlighted the powerful message of Archpriest Daniel Kovalak who stressed in his talk the evening before that the true Christ is to be preached in America and in the South.

Minutes: Archpriest Peter Tutko motioned to accept the minutes of the 2006 Assembly as presented. Archpriest Ernesto Rios seconded. The motion passed unanimously with one correction: Jeffrey Nicholas Meyer was to have been listed as the Diocesan Council Representative from the Central Florida Deanery.

Diocesan Financial Report: (See documents) Mr. Milos Konjevich passed out a financial packet of 16 pages containing a variety of reports as well as the 2008 Budget. He stressed that the “surprise” of 2006 was the enormity of the tithe increase from 2005 to 2006: \$298,000 to \$404,000; amounting to 35%.

Milos went on to say that our financial growth and stability has put us in a position to pass a budget where 25% minimum will go to missions. Since Building Programs are where the most help seems to be needed Milos outlined some financial stages during such programs that we can anticipate.

A motion was made by Fr. Stephen Freeman to accept the financial report.

Archpriest Ernesto Rios seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

The 2008 Budget was then presented. This included an “Existing Programs Budget” of \$729,934 and a “Future Development Needs Budget” adding another 201,000. The latter

included provisions for an Auxiliary Bishop, administrative assistant, pastoral school, travel for two hierarchs, and chancery modifications. One addition was made to the written budget presented: that \$2,500 be assigned to the line item, Orthodox Church in America (Metropolitan Council).

Archpriest Peter Tutko motioned to accept the budget as amended.

Archpriest James Mason seconded the motion. Passed unanimously.

Comments and questions from the floor concerning the need for courage as we proceed with our work in the South, diocesan youth, mission support, surplus revenue in the budget, and the Seminary Fund, were heard respectively from: Archpriest Peter Tutko, Nadja Golubov, Fr. Basil Bieberdorf, Joanne Worsham, and Fr. Thomas Moore. An involved discussion concerning disaster relief for parishes was initiated by Archpriest Alexander Fecanin. Several comments were heard. His Eminence asked that the discussion be tabled for a later time.

Metropolitan Council: The Metropolitan Council Report was presented by Archpriest Philip Reese and Mr. Gary Popovich. Fr. Philip emphasized that during this “post scandal” period the role of the Metropolitan Council has changed to where, for the time being, members are almost functioning as a type of Central Administration. Fr. Reese outlined the new levels of administration in Syosset: Chancellor, Secretary, Treasurer and Director of Ministries and Communication. He also referred to the new OCA computer system and budget.

A presentation was then given concerning the Proskaur/Rose law firm report dealing with the OCA’s financial scandal. According to Fr. Philip it was determined that a sum of approximately \$5,000,000 is unaccounted for. He was quick to add that this fact does not mean that all of the money was misspent or spent frivolously. Fr. Reese also mentioned that the Special Investigative Committee of the Metropolitan Council expressed disappointment that it had not been given all information available. The Committee agreed, however, given the facts they had, that the OCA financial crisis or scandal could not have come about through the efforts of one man.

Gary Popovich re-emphasized this thought and expressed his personal displeasure that the work of the Special Investigative Committee had been placed temporarily on hold. He was also quick to affirm that the Central Church Administration is not the enemy, and gave as examples of the good work being done by referring to the Department of Christian Education and the Orthodox Christian Education Commission.

Archpriest Peter Tutko delivered an emotional plea for all of us to focus our time and energy on worshipping God and evangelizing, pointing out at the same time that some of what we are experiencing in the OCA are growing pains.

The Archbishop gave his assurance that there are several Synod members who will not allow personal prejudices to move the proceedings.

Archpriest Joseph Fester stated that the best thing that we can do is to set an example of full disclosure for others to follow by placing everything on our Diocesan Website. The 1st Plenary Session was adjourned at 11:55 am.

Plenary 2

The 2nd Plenary Session opened at 2:25 pm with the singing of “O Heavenly King...” As the session began Archpriest Philip Reese (host pastor) was called to the front of the hall and presented with the Jeweled Cross by His Eminence.

Deanery Reports: (Written reports distributed)

Appalachian Deanery: Fr. Stephen Freeman

Carolina Deanery: Fr. Marcus Burch

Central Florida Deanery: Archpriest Mark Stevens

Southcentral Deanery: Archpriest Basil Zebrun

Southeastern Deanery: Archpriest Peter Smith (In Fr. Peter’s absence comments were made by Fr. Jacob Myers.)

South Florida Deanery: Archpriest Philip Reese

Missions Report:

Fr. Theodore Pisarchuk

Monasteries:

Sts. Mary and Martha Monastery

St. Michael’s Skete

Other Reports:

Archpriest Joseph Fester spoke about the Diocesan Pastoral School and Website. With regard to the school he highlighted that dialogue has taken place with both St. Tikhon’s Seminary and Southern Methodist University. Fr. Fester commented that the initial thought is that the Diocesan School will stress pastoral formation and mission.

The Archbishop offered some thoughts on mission work, highlighting our continual need for making Orthodoxy known in the cities where we have Churches, as well as the need to serve the Russian and Spanish speaking population.

Future Assembly Sites:

2008: It was decided that Dallas will be the site for the Diocese's 30th Anniversary Assembly.

Diocesan Council:

A motion was made by Archpriest Ernesto Rios, and seconded by Fr. Stephen Freeman, that the current Diocesan Council members remain in place for the upcoming year. The motion passed unanimously.

Final Remarks:

Archpriest Ernesto Rios thanked the Orthodox Church of Christ the Saviour for hosting this wonderful event. The Plenary was adjourned at 3:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Archpriest Basil Zebrun
Assembly Secretary