

**2008 Assembly**  
**Diocese of the South**  
**Orthodox Church in America**  
**June 24-27, 2008, Dallas Texas**

**Minutes**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Plenary**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Plenary opened at 10:15 am on Thursday, June 26, with the singing of “*O Heavenly King...*”

**Guests:** Archpriest Paul Lazor and Archimandrite Jonah (Paffhausen).

As Clergy Vice Chair Archpriest Joseph Fester (*on behalf of His Eminence*) named the following:

**Presidium:** Archpriest Joseph Fester and Mr. Gary Popovich.

**Secretary:** Archpriest Basil Zebrun

**Credentials:** Hieromonk John (Anderson) and Mother Thecla (Ekroyd).

**Credentials Committee** reported the presence of 67 delegates and 21 observers.

**Mr. Gary Popovich**, in general terms, stressed the 30 years of accomplishment with regard to the work of our Diocese. He then introduced Archbishop Dmitri.

**His Eminence** opened by saying that he is delighted with everyone’s presence in Dallas for the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Diocese. He then referred to its inception in 1978 and the humble beginnings. Listing some current possibilities for evangelism the Archbishop stressed that he always felt that the South was fertile ground and that in terms of our mission work we have only scratched the surface.

**Fr. Paul Lazor** was then mentioned as a supporter of the Diocese and that the Archbishop is personally indebted to Fr. Paul for the wonderful suggestions made and introductions written for His Eminence’s Scriptural commentaries. Their New England connection was referred to as well.

**Archimandrite Jonah** was then introduced. The Archbishop stressed that his name has been put forth to the Holy Synod as a candidate for Auxiliary for the South.

Finally, **Archpriest Alexander Garklavs** (*who had been a guest but who had left for New York by this time*), was referred to as an honest and straightforward man for the position as Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America. The Archbishop said that we all look forward to working with Fr. Alexander.

His Eminence then described the Diocese as the basic unit of the Church: the Bishop with his chapels, churches and clergy is where the action really takes place.

Without reviewing the entire history of the Diocese the Archbishop did refer to the initial 5, 6, or 7 parishes and to the many installations that we have now.

Certain specific communities and edifices were highlighted: St. Innocent's in Macon, GA; Holy Ascension in Charleston, SC; Christ the Saviour Cathedral in Miami, FL; and St. Seraphim Cathedral in Dallas, TX.

The Archbishop then stressed that 2 Churches from the beginning helped to build the Diocese: St. Seraphim's and Christ the Savior Cathedral. "*Memory Eternal*" was intoned and sung for Archpriests George Gladky, Michael Dirga, George DeTrana, Thomas Skaff, Archimandrite Thomas Green and other founders of and early workers in the Diocese

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Archpriest Ernesto Rios moved that the Minutes from the 2007 Assembly be accepted and approved.

Archpriest James Mason seconded the motion which was passed unanimously.

### **Finances:**

Mr. Gary Popovich introduced Mr. Milos Konjevich who presented the Financial Reports and the Budget for 2009.

He began with a general introduction highlighting the explosive growth of the tithes. Milos stated that 2001 had always been considered a "breakout" year and indeed from 2001 to 2005 tithes totaled around \$200,000. In 2006, however the tithe total went straight to the \$400,000 range (a remarkable jump). In 2007 we went over \$500,000 and in the same year we surpassed the income for the Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest.

Milos stressed that "the huge increase in 2007 becomes even more remarkable when you consider the fact that the three largest givers in 2006 (St. Seraphim's, St. Justin Martyr and St. Stephen's) all contributed lesser amounts in 2007."

Moving on to the Budget Report Mr. Konjevich referred to a \$582,189 loan total for assistance to parishes and missions at the end of 2007. He also stated that we have sufficient cash on hand now to meet development needs of the Diocese. Milos then asked for questions.

Priest John Parker raised a question about Custodial Funds (page 2 of the report).

Priest Justin Mathewes asked about the interest earned on Custodial Funds. It was reported that the interest accrues to benefit the Trust Fund.

Priest Joseph Ciarciaglino asked about the minimum amount of money that may be sent to the Diocese to hold in trust and whether or not a parish may get the money back when it needs it. Regarding the latter Milos answer, "*yes and no.*" The Diocese would like to see funds sent for at least a 4 or 5 year term.

Priest Marcus Burch inquired about the process of tithes and assessments going to pay back loans.

Matushka Jeanette Parker stressed that she personally was encouraged to hear about how the Diocese uses tithes and other funds to help missions.

Milos highlighted that 25% of every dollar (minimum) goes to support mission work.

With regard to the finances Archpriest Ernesto Rios and Mr. Gary Popovich asked that the Assembly proceed with studying and voting on 2 Resolutions which had already been discussed by the Diocesan Council. These resolutions simply formalize certain already

practiced procedures with regard to helping missions. Gary summarized the two. (*Here we have included an official summary of the Resolutions. See attached for more detail.*)

**Resolutions:**

**The first:** “*RESOLVED: That the Diocese of the South be authorized to accept, but not solicit funds from church organizations and individuals and pay an appropriate rate of interest thereon. Such funds will be shown as Liabilities (borrowings) on the Consolidated Statement of Assets and Liabilities. The proceeds may only be used for Missions and Parish Development purposes.*”

**The second:** “*RESOLVED: That the Diocese of the South be authorized to guarantee repayment of the indebtedness of its churches that is incurred for building program purposes. Such guarantees may be rendered to commercial lending organizations, other church bodies, and individuals. Authorized signatories of such guarantees are a Hierarch and the Treasurer, or other person(s) having a good working knowledge of diocesan finances.*”

Mr. Gary Popovich asked for one adjustment or correction to be made to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Resolution: strike the line after “Hierarch and Treasurer,” and add the designation, “Diocesan Hierarch.”

Archpriest Ernesto Rios moved that the Resolutions be accepted as presented and amended.

Archpriest Peter Smith seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

After the vote a clarification was made: that both the Diocesan Hierarch and Treasurer have to sign the guarantees.

**2009 Budget (See attached):**

Mr. Konjevich then presented the Diocesan Budget for 2009, highlighting the proposal of two: Regular and Extended. The recommended Extended Budget adds \$50,000 for Chancery Office improvements and reconfiguration, \$30,000 for the Diocesan Pastoral School, and \$40,000 for an administrative secretary. The total of expenses for the 2009 Regular Budget: \$876,873. Total of expenses for the 2009 Extended Budget: \$996,873.

In addition it was mentioned that the Diocesan Council asked for an extra \$10,000 for travel: \$5,000 each added for the Archbishop and Auxiliary, making the total for the Extended Budget: \$1,096,873.

Archpriest Ernesto Rios moved to accept the Extended Budget as presented with additions.

Priest John Maxwell seconded the motion.

Discussion ensued. Priest John Parker asked about the partnership of Southern Methodist University with the Diocesan Pastoral School, as compared with a partnership with St. Tikhon’s Seminary in South Canaan, PA. Archpriest Joseph Fester answered by saying that SMU has been courting us, in a way. He highlighted the fact that we can take advantage of financial assistance through SMU.

Mr. Gary Popovich called for a vote on the motion to accept the 2009 Extended Budget.

Priest John Anderson of St. Seraphim Cathedral asked for a clarification concerning additional Chancery Office expenses. Milos Konjevich explained that they are related to various general housekeeping needs.

Mr. Gary Popovich asked once again for a vote on the motion to accept the Budget. The Budget passed unanimously.

**Metropolitan Council Report:**

The Chair was passed to Archpriest Joseph Fester who introduced Mr. Gary Popovich as presenter of the Metropolitan Council Report.

Gary stressed that this has been a difficult year for both him and Fr. Philip Reese; that there is much work to be done in order to restore trust within the Church (OCA).

He then referred to three Metropolitan Council Meetings during the past year and Fr. Philip's involvement with the Special Investigative Committee as well as his own involvement with the Finance Committee.

Gary spoke of Fr. Tassos (*in Syosset, NY*) as a competent and approachable treasurer, and mentioned the reduction in staff members at Syosset.

He then mentioned that all stavropegal institutions have been directed to give an account of their finances, and that Syosset must spend a certain amount each year to cover legal expenses.

Gary highlighted 7 charges (*responsibilities*) given to the Special Investigative Committee, as well as the situation with Alaskan lands, emphasizing that we need appropriate leadership to move forward.

At this time, 12 noon, Assembly participants broke for lunch.

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**2<sup>nd</sup> Plenary**

The Second Plenary opened at 1:45 pm.

Priest David Rucker and Mr. Nick Chakos delivered presentations (*respectively*) on the OCMC and the IOCC.

**Metropolitan Council Report (continued):**

Mr. Gary Popovich introduced Archpriest Philip Reese for his portion of the Metropolitan Council report.

Fr. Philip reflected upon his work as an MC representative from 1994 until now and noted that progress has occurred in terms of openness and productiveness. He also defined the role of the Investigative Committee as, "following the trail of funds that are in question, to see what went where."

General questions were asked by Matushka Jeanette Parker and Donna Ryan about feelings within the Committee and whether or not there will be an end to all of this.

Archpriest Peter Tutko asked what we should be praying for in terms of the OCA Administration. Fr. Philip answered: wisdom, patience, forgiveness, love and toughness. He also stressed that above all we must pray for our Hierarchs.

Gary Popovich commented on the responsibility that we have as an Autocephalous Church. Priest Krist Nickolas emphasized that we need to be faithful to the Autocephaly that we have been given.

Dr. Bob Vranes asked when the SIC Report will be made public.

Archpriest James Mason mentioned the possibility of internet reporting.

Priest Marcus Burch asked about a possible conflict of interest with the Kondratick's being members of a Church in our Diocese and their impending lawsuits against the OCA.

The Archbishop then spoke on how Rodion Kondratick initially came into the Diocese.

Archimandrite Jonah described Syosset as an arm of the Holy Synod and that "the OCA is us." We have the responsibility (*he said*) to clean up this situation ourselves, that the scandal has been blown way out of proportion and that we need to keep things in perspective.

#### **Nominations: Diocesan Council and Metropolitan Council:**

As far as the Metropolitan Council is concerned, Archpriest Philip Reese and Mr. Gary Popovich were unanimously re-elected as our representatives.

#### **Diocesan Council Representatives:**

<u>Dallas Deanery</u>	Dr. Robert Vranes Alt. Jeff Russell
<u>Atlanta Deanery</u>	Scott Brightwell Alt. Dr. Carla Thomas
<u>Miami Deanery</u>	Donna Ryan
<u>Orlando Deanery</u>	Vacant
<u>Appalachian Deanery</u>	Bert Walthers Alt. Ed Stickle
<u>Carolina Deanery</u>	Jeanette Parker

#### **Deanery Reports:**

Archpriest Joseph Fester (See attached)  
 Archpriest Peter Smith (See attached)  
 Priest Stephen Freeman (See attached)  
 Priest Marcus Burch (See attached)  
 Archpriest Philip Reese (See attached)  
 Archpriest Mark Stevens (See attached)

**Monastery Reports:**

Mother Thecla (See attached)  
Hieromonk John (See attached)

**Other Business:**

It was reported by Archpriest Joseph Fester that the Diocesan Council had approved the putting forth of the name, Archimandrite Jonah (Paffhausen) to the Holy Synod for consideration, to be the Auxiliary Bishop for the Diocese of the South. All Assembly participants gave their approval as well and shouted a spontaneous, "Axios!"

Archpriest Ernesto Rios thanked St. Seraphim Cathedral for hosting the Assembly.

**Future Sites:**

2009: Atlanta, St. John the Wonderworker Church  
2009: Pastoral Conference: St. Justin Martyr Church, Jacksonville, FL.

Discussion took place concerning how to get items placed in the Diocesan Budget. Archimandrite Jonah expressed his gratitude to His Eminence and Assembly participants.

Archpriest Joseph Fester asked for prayers for Matushka Alla Wheeler, the wife of Protodeacon Eric Wheeler.

Archpriest Paul Yerger moved that the Plenary Session be adjourned.

Archpriest Ernesto Rios seconded the motion which was passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Archpriest Basil Zebrun

+ Approved Archbishop Dmitri  
