

**(Draft) Minutes of the 59th Assembly of the Diocese of New England
October 28-29, 2022**

The Assembly gathered at Holy Trinity Church, Springfield, VT and opened with a Service of Prayer, celebrated by His Beatitude Metropolitan TIKHON at 10:00 AM on Friday morning, October 28, 2022, and the meeting was called to order at 10:30 AM with the singing of “O Heavenly King.”

I. ELECTION OF ASSEMBLY OFFICERS

Fr John Kreta, Chancellor of New England, chaired the election of Assembly Officers, as follows:

Clergy Vice Chair – Fr Steven Voytovich, nominated by the Diocesan Council.

Lay Vice Chair – Mat. Cindy Voytovich, nominated by the Diocesan Council.

Secretariat – Alexia Tassmer (the Diocesan Secretary) and Fr Theophan Whitfield, nominated by the Diocesan Council. MaryJane Rodgers was nominated from the floor.

Nominations & Resolutions Committee – Fr John Hopko, and Fr Joshua Mosher nominated by the Diocesan Council. Fr Patrick Burns nominated from the floor.

Credentials & Tellers Committee – Rick Comshaw and Irene Vassos, nominated by the Diocesan Council. John Kruchok was nominated from the floor.

Rick Comshaw, second by Irene Vassos to close nominations and cast one vote for the entire slate.

The slate was approved unanimously. Motion passed.

Credential’s Report presented by Rick Comshaw

Voting Attendees		Non-Voting Attendees	
Hierarchs	1	Observers, Guests, Alternates (10 observers, 4 guests)	
Clergy Delegates	23		
Lay Delegates	18		
Diocesan Council	10		
Subtotal	52	Subtotal	14

Grand Total Voting and Non-Voting 66 present

Fr John Kreta then turned the meeting over to Fr Steven Voytovich.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF THE 2021 MINUTES

3 Corrections:

Pg 4 Fr Parnell – wrong number of children and asked for names not be included.

Chancellor’s Report – Bob (not Dave) Popadic

End of report – budget is not “proposed” but “completed”.

Fr Lickwar, not Dean of Northern Deanery.

Pg 17 wording of amended budget instead of “motion passed” but “Amended motion carried”. Remove final motion as it was already accomplished in amendments.

Motion to accept the Minutes as amended made by Fr Joshua Mosher, seconded by Rick Comshaw.

Motion passed.

III. HIERARCH'S REPORT

Highlights of Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON oral report.

We just passed the third anniversary of the passing of Archbishop Nikon, also presided last month over funeral services for Metropolitan Herman. One year anniversary of Metropolitan Theodosius, and the falling asleep of Matushka Anne Hopko.

In review of AAC in Baltimore it was peaceful and well organized. Election of Bishop Daniel to be Bishop of the Midwest. Liturgies were wonderful. Thanks to Dn Peter Ilchuck, AAC organizer, and to the local committee. Relocation of the Chancery. The offices have moved to Springfield, Virginia. His Beatitudes new residence is in Falls Church, VA. The relocation of the archives to St Vladimir's is still underway. The disposal of the Westwood Property is still ongoing, and still houses chancery activities and archives. COVID still faces challenges but also much that is encouraging.

Special thanks to Fr John Kreta as Chancellor, and also to our Deans Fr John Hopko, Fr Mark Korban, and Fr Vasily Lickwar.

Pastoral visits made to:

Holy Ghost in Bridgeport. Ordained Justin Griffing to diaconate. Fr John Jillions has been granted retirement.

Holy Transfiguration. Ordained Ambrose Powell to priesthood. Followed by Unction at Three Saints, Ansonia.

Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston, for the ordination of Dn Michael Arida, and recognition of Fr Robert and Mat Susan Arida on his retirement.

Vespers at Holy Trinity in New Britain, welcoming Fr Philip Beiner. Followed by dinner with local clergy, including Fr Constantine Bodien, new to Hartford.

SS Cyril & Methodius, centenary and jeweled cross awarded to Fr John Hopko.

Coming up at St Nicholas in Pittsfield is the ordination of Dn Justin Griffing to the priesthood.

A special thanks to many, but especially to Rdr John Skrobat, completing 13 years of serving as Treasurer.

IV. CHANCELLOR'S REPORT:

Your Beatitude, Very Reverend Archpriests, Priests, Deacons, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Glory Be to Jesus Christ!

This past year has been a busy year in the life of the Diocese of New England. As our country, our parishes are trying to get back to being able to do the work that COVID had put halt to, so is our Diocese. We are once again able to hold functions, get together, coffee hours, outreach programs, adult and bible studies, meetings (like this assembly), in person rather than through a computer, and it may well be that this is one reason why, for the first time in several years, the Diocese has a modest increase in its membership rather than a decrease. Glory to God!

You will hear in today's and tomorrow's reports about the great work that has been done this year, but I would like to take a moment to point out some of the strong efforts made this year for the building up of our Diocese, and to thank those who worked so hard to make it happen.

The first is that after a two-year absence, we were once again able to hold our Diocesan Youth Rally. Just recently, I attended a meeting in which youth workers and chancellors of all the Dioceses of the OCA met to discuss the hiring of a Department of Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministry Director. In this meeting it was discussed and shared by many priests, how the summer and youth camps shaped their lives in the church, the tremendous impact on their lives, the lifelong friendships established at camp. Our Youth Rally is one of the most important things we must do in our Diocese. It is also why the Holy Synod has expressed that this issue of youth work is one of their highest priorities. Thank you, Fr. Moses and all the volunteers, who gave of their time, and often own expense, to run our Youth Rally again this year.

Work has continued under the leadership of Rich Comshaw, on our Diocesan Strategic Plan. We will hear their report tomorrow and the progress made. The plan has progressed to the point where we are now starting its implementation. I ask all of you to look at this plan, to bring it to your parishes, to participate in it, especially the parish health assessments. This has been developed so that it can benefit all of our parishes to self-evaluate and to implement ways in which to help your parish flourish.

One item we have discussed for the past two assemblies, and ignored for way too long prior, are updated and meaningful guidelines for Clergy Compensation. The committee established for this went through a few leadership changes but is now under the chairmanship of Dn. Justin Griffing. This committee, you will see in its presentation to this assembly, has done a phenomenal amount of work on these guidelines. If we want priests in our diocese, we must support them and their families financially. These guidelines provide that in a fair and balanced way. I look forward to their presentation to all of you and their formal adoption by this assembly.

Another committee established by the Diocesan Council this year, came from the resolution passed at last year's assembly to "solicit, explore, and evaluate practical proposals for the creation of a New England Diocesan Center..." This committee also did a tremendous amount of work in preparing this report for review at this Assembly on the various options and their feasibility. This report hopefully gives direction if any assembly were to ever consider moving in the direction of establishing a Diocesan Center. We thank this committee for all their hard work.

Another new initiative created this year is a Diocesan Deaconate Program. This program is being developed to encourage men in our diocese who may wish to study both on-line and locally for preparation for ordination to the Holy Deaconate. In the back of your assembly books, you will find a three-page summary of the program that has been developed. This program and the full curriculum is currently being reviewed by His Beatitude and will still need to be reviewed and approved by the OCA's Board of Theological Education, but nonetheless a very exciting program for our Diocese. A big debt of gratitude is owed to Deacon Mark Roosien for working so hard in developing this program.

We welcome back Fr. James Parnell from his yearlong deployment in Africa and reemphasize our resolution from last year's assembly of our prayerful gratitude to Fr. James and his unit. We give thanks to God for his and his company's safe return to Connecticut. Fr. James will give a presentation to us on his experience in Africa following my report that we look forward to hearing. We also congratulate him in his new position as the Chief of Chaplains of the VA hospital.

I would like to thank Timothy Cole for representing our Diocese at the IOCC Serve-X-Treme conference this past summer in the Midwest. Unfortunately, Tim is not able to be with us today in person but has provided us with a presentation for us to see and will share his experience with us via zoom.

This year, two of our distinguished clergy retired from active parish ministry, Archpriest John Jillions and Archpriest Robert Arida. Both have been an example to all of us what the priestly

ministry should and could be like, both have provided us with scholarly work as well for all of our edification. We wish them many happy and healthy years in retirement and look forward to their visiting parishes in their new priestly responsibility as a “substitute priest”. His Beatitude has granted our Diocesan Treasurer John Skrobat’s request to resign his position at the end of this Assembly. After a Diocesan wide search, His Beatitude has appointed Dn. Justin Griffing as our new Diocesan Treasurer. Thank you to John for your many years of service and thank you to Deacon Justin for accepting this new responsibility. I would also ask you to keep in your prayers Fr. Anthony Gori, former rector of St. Mark’s Mission in Kingston, as he currently is in a home and continues to experience declining health.

Diocesan Clergy

Locum Tenens:

We pray that our Good Lord grants good health and many years to His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON, and we add our good wishes and thanksgiving to God with the whole Church as we celebrate the 10th year anniversary of His Beatitude’s election as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America. May God grant you many more years of fruitful service as the Primate of our Church. As was agreed upon at our last assembly, our Diocese is grateful and thankful to have His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon as our Locum Tenens these last 3 years, (since the repose of our Beloved Archbishop Nikon) and going forward while our Diocese remains vacant of a Bishop whose see is in New England. During this past year alone, His Beatitude has ordained men to the priesthood and diaconate for service to our Diocese. He has worked to fill vacancies in our parishes trying to match the talents of the priests with the needs of the parish. Throughout the year he has been recruiting, meeting and interviewing men preparing for ordination, from readers to priests, and with clergy requesting transfer in our Diocese. He has meet with the Chancellor and Deans throughout the year to discuss the difficult issues facing our Diocese and possible solutions and means to address these issues, and although no concrete plans have yet to be made, he resolves to keep discussing remedies. Now with COVID a little less of a threat, he has made the time in addition to all of his other official visitations and schedules, to resume making Arch pastoral visits to the parishes in New England, including the CT Deanery mission service of Holy Unction on the 5th Sunday of Great Lent. He has meet with our Diocesan Clergy on several occasions to be available directly to the clergy to hear and guide them through their concerns, and even planned and hosted a Lenten Retreat for our Clergy in March. We are indeed Blessed and grateful to God to have His Beatitude as our Diocesan spiritual Father who, in addition to being the Primate of our Church and all of the demands of our Orthodox Church in America with its national and global responsibilities, he has been, and continues to be, attentive to our all of our diocesan needs, both large and small. It is our sincere hope and prayer, that His Beatitude’s move to the Washington DC area, and thus further away from us, will not impact his presence in our Diocese.

As I said last year, and it bears repeating, all this is only a small indication of His Beatitude’s love for Christ, of Christ’s Holy Church, of our diocese of New England and all its parishes and parishioners. He rejoices in our joys, and he weeps in our grieving. So, although our Diocese is “vacant” - we are assured of the care and love of His Beatitude, and that we will be shepherded, ministered to, and loved by his Beatitude even after a new bishop is appointed.

Eis polla eti Despota.!

We are also indebted for the help of our OCA Chancellor, Fr. Alexander Rentel, and the Metropolitan’s personal secretary Deacon Peter Ilchuk who assist the Metropolitan with his many responsibilities, but also ensures that our diocesan needs are attended to and do not get lost in the great demands placed upon the shoulders of our Locum Tenens.

Diocesan Bishop: Our Diocese is continuing the work of finding a new Bishop for the Diocese of New England under the guidance of His Beatitude. The Holy Synod at its last meeting completed the vetting process with candidates for consideration for the Episcopacy. The search committee will soon be reaching out to talk with these candidates about the vacancy in New England. It is important to remember that although there may be a candidate available, that does not guarantee that he would be interested in, or a suitable fit, for the Diocese of New England.

Welcome: Last year I reported to you the alarming statistics of our clergy in the Diocese of New England, the problem of our aging clergy and our lack of young priests. I would like to welcome our 3 new priests who transferred into the Diocese of New England this year, Fr. John Teague, Fr. Constantine Bodien, Fr. Philip Beiner and whose presence now makes our clergy just a little younger. We also celebrate the ordination of last year's seminarian Fr. Ambrose Powell to the Holy Priesthood, and the ordinations of Justin Griffing and Michael Arida to the Holy Deaconate. God willing, we hope to celebrate this coming Sunday, the ordination of Deacon Justin to the Holy Priesthood at St. Nicholas in Pittsfield, MA. Although not yet officially in our Diocese, we also hope to welcome Fr. Lawrence Soper in just a few days, on November 1, 2022.

Pastoral/Parochial Changes (Since last Assembly)

- TEAGUE, Priest John was canonically received into the ranks of the clergy of the Orthodox Church in America effective November 15, 2021, by Metropolitan Tikhon. Priest John was attached to St. Jacob of Alaska Mission, Northfield Falls, VT, effective November 15, 2021
- PARNELL, Priest James was released from his duties at All Saints Church, Hartford, CT, granted a leave of absence and attached to All Saints of North America Mission, Salisbury, CT, effective January 28, 2022.
- VOYTOVICH, Archpriest Stephen, in addition to his other duties, was assigned Administrator of Holy Ghost Church, Bridgeport, CT, effective January 1, 2022.
- PARNELL, Priest James, was, returned to active service from his leave of absence, was released from All Saints of North America Mission, Salisbury, CT, and assigned Rector of All Saints Church, Hartford, CT, effective April 1, 2022.
- PARNELL, Priest James was released from his duties at All Saints Church, Hartford, CT, and attached to All Saints of North America Mission, Salisbury, CT, effective May 1, 2022
- BODIEN, Priest Constantine was released from his duties at St. Nicholas Church, Kenosha, WI, and the omophorion of Bishop Daniel and the Diocese of the Midwest. He was transferred to the omophorion of Metropolitan Tikhon and the Diocese of New England, and assigned Acting Rector of All Saints Church, Hartford, CT, effective June 15, 2022.
- HOPKO, Archpriest John, was released from his duties as Administrator of All Saints Church in Hartford, CT, effective June 15, 2022. All his other duties remain the same.
- BEINER, Priest Philip was released from his duties at St. Michael Mission in Kissimmee, FL and the omophorion of Archbishop Alexander. He was transferred to the omophorion of Metropolitan Tikhon and the Diocese of New England, and assigned as Acting Rector of Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT, effective September 1, 2022.
- HOPKO, Archpriest John was released from his duties as Administrator of Holy Trinity Church, New Britain, CT, effective September 1, 2022. All his other duties remain the same.
- WHITFIELD, Priest Theophan, was released from his duties as Rector of St. Nicholas Church in Salem, MA and assigned as acting Dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston, MA effective September 1, 2022.
- SHERMAN, Archpriest Mark, while in retirement is assigned as Administrator of St. Nicholas Church, Salem, CT, effective September 1, 2022.

- MIKITISH, Priest John, was released from his attachment to Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven, CT and service in the Diocese of New England, and remains under the omophorion and attached to St. Sergius of Radonezh Chapel, Oyster Bay Cove, NY. Effective September 1, 2022.

Ordained Clergy

- GRIFFING, Justin was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on January 23, 2022, by Metropolitan Tikhon at Holy Ghost Church, Bridgeport, CT. Deacon Justin was assigned to St. Nicholas Church, Pittsfield, MA, effective January 23, 2022.
- POWELL, Deacon Ambrose was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on April 10, 2022, by Metropolitan Tikhon at Holy Transfiguration Church, New Haven, CT. Priest Ambrose was attached to Holy Resurrection Church, Claremont, NH,
- ARIDA, Michael was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on July 2, 2022, by Metropolitan Tikhon at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston, MA. Deacon Michael was attached to Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston, MA, effective July 2, 2022.

Retired Clergy

- JILLIONS, Archpriest John was released from his duties at Holy Ghost Church, Bridgeport, CT, and granted retirement, effective January 1, 2022. In his retirement, he was attached to All Saints Church, Hartford, CT.
- Arida, Archpriest Robert was released from his duties as Dean of Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston MA, and granted retirement, effective September 1, 2022. In his retirement, he was attached to Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston, MA.

Memory Eternal: Two weeks ago, marked the 40th day of the passing of His Beatitude Metropolitan Herman. Many years ago, Metropolitan Herman (then bishop) served our diocese as locum tenens. Although not a member of our Diocese, she often came and visited her son, (Fr. John Hopko) Matushka Anne Hopko also entered into eternal life this past August. We ask that our Good Lord grant them rest with the righteous.

Parish Vacancies

We continue to look for possible candidates for our vacant parishes and give thanks to God for providing us with clergy to fill some of these vacancies. This year we filled vacancies at Holy Trinity - New Britain, CT; at All Saints – Hartford, CT; at Holy Trinity Cathedral – Boston MA. Within the next week, with the pending ordination of Dn. Justin Griffing we hope to fill the vacancy at St. Nicholas – Pittsfield, MA, and upon Fr. Soper officially entering our Diocese, he will fill the vacancy at St. Nicholas in Salem, MA. Thus, as of next week, leaving the following parishes currently vacant in our Diocese:

- Holy Resurrection in Berlin, NH
- St. Mark of Ephesus in Kingston, MA
- St Nicholas in Norwich, CT
- Holy Ghost in Bridgeport, CT

Waterbury, CT: Nativity of the Holy Virgin Mary Orthodox Church, Waterbury, CT, is administered by me, Archpriest John Hopko. I have been serving in Waterbury in that capacity since December 2016. Presently, liturgical services are being held on an only very occasional basis in the Waterbury Parish. Rather, parishioners are being asked to avail themselves of the opportunity to worship regularly in one of the many other nearby Orthodox Christian parishes. Some Waterbury parishioners have been attending services in the neighboring Terryville Parish.

With the blessing of His Eminence, Archbishop NIKON, the Waterbury Parish Temple and the Waterbury Parish Rectory were both demolished during the three-week long period beginning Monday, July 22, 2019. The process of demolition revealed both buildings were in even worse structural condition than we had realized during our pre-demolition investigations. These “after-action” findings reinforce that the right decisions were made in Waterbury, vis-à-vis demolition. We are now working to determine what, exactly, will be the

future of the Waterbury Parish and the parishioners who are members there. Discussions have begun between the Waterbury and Terryville Parishes about a possible merger.

Seminarians

This year we have only 2 seminarians from our Diocese. Of the 4 seminarians we had last year, 2 of the seminarians graduated in May with Fr. Ambrose being ordained to the Holy Priesthood, and the other seminarian currently pursuing other work for the church at this time. Unfortunately, one student recently left the seminary for personal reasons. The fourth student, Kevin Pimpinelli, who is with us today, is now in his second year at St. Tikhon's. This year along with Kevin, we have 1 new seminarian Deacon Mark Roosien, who is on a special one-year program to prepare him for the Holy Priesthood. Deacon Mark is also the first recipient to receive money from our Fr. Steven Belonick Scholarship Fund to pay for all of his cost of attending seminary.

We are all aware of the need to encourage young men to pray about and consider the priestly vocation. The theme of vocations was a focus of our All-American Council, and one that His Beatitude continually encourages us to think about, to pray about and to act upon. I plead with all of you to please think about those who you think may possibly make good priests, and to talk with them about their vocation in the Church. Priests, please mentor young men, share with them the abundant joy that it is to be a priest and how rewarding it can be and do not hesitate in encouraging them to seek this path of vocation. Remember that we all have vocations.

But we also need to consider ways to support those who take this step. Next week, God willing, I will be attending a Vocations Summit at St Tikhon's, where I will be meeting with other Chancellors, seminary deans and teachers to share what each of our dioceses are doing to find and support candidates for seminary, discuss ways that the national church can help, and ideas and programs on the diocesan level that we may be able to implement to foster and support priestly vocations in our Diocese.

Thank you

Thanks must go to our Deans, Fr. Vasily Lickwar, Fr. John Hopko and Fr. Mark Korban who have remained steadfast and faithful even as more and more responsibilities are thrust upon them. Thank you also to the officers and members of our Diocesan Council. Their dedication and love for our diocese, their willingness to serve and do what is necessary is an inspiration to me and I am sure to others. Thank you to all of our Youth workers and volunteers, nurturing our youth. To all the committee chairs and members who worked so hard this year for the building up of our Diocese of New England. Thank you to the host parishes of Holy Trinity in Springfield, VT and Holy Resurrection of Claremont, NH for hosting us for this 59th Diocesan Assembly and to Alexia Tassmer and all the volunteers who worked so hard to make it successful.

But there are two people that I would especially like to thank this year:

After 13 years as our Diocesan Treasurer, John Skrobat is stepping down. John has been a faithful and dedicated servant to not only our diocese, but also as our treasurer working with the administration of the OCA in understanding and implementing what effect and impact moving to proportional giving will have on our National Church. John has always looked for and found ways to fund the needs of our diocese. His calm and positive manner will be sorely missed.

After a six-year term as the Connecticut Dean, Fr. John Hopko will be ending his term as Dean. Fr. John at times had to oversee 4 parishes at one time, has (and will continue) to merge the parish of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin and Ss. Cyril and Methodious parish. He has done this with great personal cost, but with a love, dedication and obedience to the Church and his bishop. We cannot even begin to thank Fr. John for his leadership and mentoring of priests, parish councils and faithful, which in these last six years was probably the most difficult times any dean has had to work in.

We wish both of them Many Many Years and owe them a great gratitude of thanks. And finally, I would like to thank all of you, my parish, and my family, for your patience, forgiveness, love and support, and ask your forgiveness for my many failures, and for any way I have failed to lead, guide, strengthen or encourage you. I look forward with great joy and anticipation to see all that God will guide us to in the coming months and years, as we continue the work given all of us for the building up of the life of the Diocese of New England.

Your Servant in the Lord,
Archpriest John Kreta,
Chancellor, Diocese of New England

Fr Steven Voytovich welcomed seminarian Sophia Matias of the Greek Diocese that is joining us this Assembly.

15-minute break (11:30 - 11:45)

V. **PRESENTATION BY FR JAMES PARNELL**

Fr James chief chaplain of Vet Admin Healthcare back from South Africa. HOA in charge of 1000 soldiers from 6 states Task force "Iron Grey" continuum before 1776 only company of mountain warfare. As Military Chaplain, Fr Parnell was in Jebuti, Kenya, and Samalia during Holy and Bright week. In the military everything is miniature, prosphora was made in a toaster oven. Specialist in Religious affairs Fr James Catechized and Baptized 4 individuals. St Constantine and Helen was the oldest Orthodox Church in Jebudi, built in the late 1800s early 1900s by Greek immigrants, near the Gulf of Aidan that empties into the Red Sea. Fr Parnell provided support to soldiers and administered to the healing and health of those wounded mentally and physically and to honor the dead. Many Muslims in the area. American military provided places for all in military and the community to pray. There were many children and orphans. Fr James also ministered to children.

Acknowledged our veterans in attendance Rick Comshaw, Bob Popadic, Fr Mark Sherman, and Rdr John Skrobat. Many Years to all veterans and to Fr James!

VI. **DEANERY and DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

Requested to only add to submitted reports.

- a. Boston Deanery
- b. Connecticut
- c. Northern Deanery
- d. Metropolitan Council

Session I ended at 1:10PM to break for lunch.

Session II Began at 2:15PM

Tim Cole presentation for IOCC

- e. ONE/Communication – Request was made by John Kruchok to look at the diocesan website as it looks very dated. Fr Mosher will look into.
- f. ONE Stewards – This is the first time we have not met our Goal.
- g. Parish Grant Initiative – Presentation of Vacation Church School (Ansonia parish)

This year there were 72 kids and 35 staff (at different times). Younger adults stepped up this year we had junior staff (those that aged out) cost has been \$40 for last several years. Fr Patrick has received catechumens from Vacation Church School.

- h. Scholarships Report by John Skrobat
- i. Diocesan Youth Report
- j. Background Checks
- k. Parish By-Laws
- l. Investment Committee Report – Committee stated a Resolution is coming tomorrow.

Motion by Rick Comshaw to accept all reports as amended and presented and seconded by Fr Joshua Mosher.

Motion passed.

VII. Presentation by Timothy Cole – Diocesan Representative to IOCC

Tim told of a wonderful week-long event with the IOCC that sent teams to help clean up from devastation, build houses. The goal is to end hunger with a presentation of 2nd Harvest Hartland, with personal and meaningful approaches. Later went to the Salvation Army food shelter.

A house in the suburbs – blight and painted thru Hearts and Hammers it was nice to be able to make a difference. The next day was muck and gut day as we cleaned out damage from the storm (muck out). The last day was another trip to homelessness.

This is something that is available to senior year High School students. Thank you to the Diocese for the opportunity and funding to participate.

Credential's Report presented by: Rick Comshaw

Voting Attendees		Non-Voting Attendees	
Hierarchs	1	Observers, Guests, Alternates 13 (9 observers, 4 guests)	
Clergy Delegates	23		
Lay Delegates	18		
Diocesan Council	10		
Subtotal	52	Subtotal	13

Grand Total Voting and Non-Voting 65

VIII. AUDITOR'S REPORT

Mat. Cindy Voytovich presented the findings of the Auditing Committee. The committee found the books of the Diocese and of ONE Stewards to be in order. A motion was made by John Kruchok, seconded by Rick Comshaw, that the Auditor's Report be accepted. The motion passed unanimously.

IX. COLA

Alexia Tassmer presented the 2022 COLA of 8.5% to be applied to parishes 2023 Budget.

X. 2022 DIOCESAN PARISH ANALYSIS

Bob Popadic presented the 2022 Status of the Diocese of New England and its Parishes. He highlighted:

With 1,359 communicants in 2022, we experienced a modest increase from 2021, but we still have 6.3% fewer communicants than in 2019.

The median parish in 2022 had 50 parishioners, down from 75 in 2003, while the number of parishes has declined by only one.

OCA Minimum Compensation policy, reflected in the DNE proposed policy, will increase costs of many parishes still with a full time rector.

The 2023 budget holds the Total Fair Share at \$300,000 or \$221 per parishioner, but has a loss of \$82,804, compared to our usual \$10,000 loss. With a full time bishop we will need to increase the Total Fair Share, even if we transfer earnings from the Endowment to help reduce the impact.

Fr John Hopko: it does seem that we need to think beyond the normal model of ministry (one priest, one building, one parking lot). What would be more efficient? We should do what the facts and charts tell us to do. Something more efficient.

This is also for the mental health of our priests.

Protodeacon Zachary Wasuta: we like our hoe churches, but we have to do something.

Fr Steven Voytovich: consolidation doesn't have to mean closing parishes but could mean preserving the identity of individual parishes while finding more efficient ways to serve them with available resources. Also, we can build new parishes/missions where they are needed and will not overlap with other parishes.

Judith Ross: would the diocese or OCA consider a publicity campaign?

Nadia Milleron: can our parishes offer recovery-group type support to people in need? Online?

Fr Mircea Geana: evangelizing means going out and engaging the wider world. We have to look outward especially when the numbers are down. Don't look in and reduce but look outward and be joyful sharing what we have.

Inga Leonova: two ways that our parishes seem to grow. Either by attracting people who are disaffected with their home churches, or by reaching out to the world in love and joy. We have to be parishes of the second type, or else we will not avoid the decline that affects us.

William Troester: we compete with ourselves unfortunately, with overlapping jurisdictions.

Dn Jordan Vargas: Fr John Tomassi's church in west LA "I follow the rubrics" was his answer to the question about "what makes your church grow?"

Joe Peceovich: leadership is also important, to help identify the gifts and talents in our parishes.

XI. **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Rdr John Skrobat, Diocesan Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's Report

STATEMENT OF ASSETS:

Checkbook balance (8/31/2022): \$22,079.67

Total Actual Income for 2022 (fiscal year ending 08/31/22): \$280,545.73

Total Actual Expense \$289,160.48

Total Actual Income over Expenses \$ (8,614.75)

Donna Teague: what does “part-time bishop” mean?

Answer: it really means “sharing” a bishop with another Diocese.

Rdr John also noted that one of the Deans didn’t accept the increase and the Chancellor didn’t accept the full increase.

A complete, detailed breakdown of the Treasurer’s Report was distributed to those in attendance and copies are on file with the Diocesan Secretary. Rdr John reviewed orally all the reports he distributed, explaining the facts and figures presented in the printed information.

Inga Leonova moved and Dn Justin Griffing seconded the acceptance of the Treasurer’s report. Motion passed.

XII. **OLD BUSINESS**

1. **DIOCESAN STRATEGIC PLAN**

We need 3 more people to make this work. The second group hopefully will start in January. This is an Orthodox Assessment tool and it’s free.

Discussion

Metropolitan Tikhon: We need to do an assessment on ourselves, and with neighboring parishes we can help each other. It may show the need to merge or not. Consolidation is not a failure its hope and provides hope to a struggling parish.

Second Session ended at 4:45 PM

Overnight Break

Mat. Cindy Voytovich, Lay Vice-Chair, opened Session III at 11:27 AM with a prayer.

The Auditors want to thank Pdn Paul Nimchek for his support to ONE Stewards over the years.

OLD BUSINESS (cont’d)

2. **DIOCESAN CLERGY COMPENSATION**

a. Highlights

- i. Definitions of minimum compensation = OCA minimum (=cash salary + housing allowance) + SECA reimbursement
- ii. Dn Justin then points out the major areas and situations treated in the guidelines.
- iii. Guidelines intended as a tool for Deans meeting with councils, setting the compensation package.
- iv. It envisions a full-time priest; it also gives something for parishes to aspire to if they cannot afford a full-time salary.

- b. Questions:
- i. Fr Joshua Mosher: do any of our parishes meet the minimum guidelines? (Likely not, but there is data collected by Bob Popadic that tracks that very topic)
 - ii. Pdn Paul Nimchek: can you talk more about what “MFI” represents?
 1. Dn Justin explains what Median Family Income means
 - iii. Pdn Paul: who provides the MFI to the parishes?
 1. Dn Justin: it will be published at the annual assembly every year.
 2. Bob P: we have materials ready to help with this if the proposal passes.
 - iv. Fr Kreta: once the guidelines are adopted, it will be asked of every parish to do the worksheet and find where you are in meeting the guidelines.
 1. Fr Joshua: and then what?
 2. Fr Kreta: then you report the results to the bishop. It is important to know the guidelines and then to work with the deans to work towards meeting them.
 3. Bob P: if you meet the guidelines, you still have to apply the COLA.
 - a. Fr Kreta: clarification, if you aren’t meeting the minimums, but are trying to work toward the guidelines, you have to AT LEAST increase the salary by the COLA.
 - v. Fr John Hopko: this proposed document is a very useful tool for helping deans and councils, because it represents a starting point from which you can begin a discussion. It also is a good tool to help educate our parishes about how underpaid many clergy are and will help to correct the wide variety of compensation packages that exist from parish to parish. It’s a stewardship education document.
 1. HB Tikhon: I was going to say all that too. And you speak as the dean so it’s not self-serving.
 - vi. Daniella Poloynova: if this is a proposal, and will affect our parishes, shouldn’t we first take the proposal to our parishes and have a discussion there about it first? Do we have to vote today?
 1. Mat. Cindy (Chair): our parishes have given us each the authority to represent them and to make decisions on their behalf, but it’s of course a good question because we all feel the weight of what’s involved.
 2. Met Tikhon: it’s important to remember that this is still a “working document” even if it is passed, because it becomes a goal to work toward and to revisit every year. It’s a vision.
 - vii. Ellen Santoro: is it possible to see an example to help us illustrate the way the guidelines might work.
 1. Dn Justin: Bob has done much of that work already for every parish. His work is included in the submitted document.
 2. Bob P: [then elaborates on the data he has submitted]
 3. Mat Cindy: all this info will be distributed today.
 4. Rick Comshaw: also, remember this is a minimum standard, not a maximum that you should pay the priest.

Credential’s Report presented by: Irene Vassos

Voting Attendees		Non-Voting Attendees	
Hierarchs	1	Observers, Guests, Alternates	
11 (9 observers, 2 guests)			
Clergy Delegates	19		
Lay Delegates	18		

Diocesan Council	10		
Subtotal	48	Subtotal	11
Grand Total Voting and Non-Voting	59		

- c. Motion from the Diocesan Council, second to the motion: Fr Steven Hosking
i. Voice vote: One NAY, two ABSTENTIONS, and all else vote YAY.
Motion Passed.

d. Proposed COLA change - Now that the guidelines have passed, the committee proposes the following:

- i. The COLA is calculated by examining the July US City average CPI, by approved resolution of this assembly. (Moved: by the committee. Seconded: Fr Joshua)
1. Claudia Peters: When are the guidelines to be implemented?
 2. Answer: 2024

Motion passed.

- e. Mat Cindy and Irene Vassos: many thanks to everyone who has worked on this project, especially Dn Justin Griffing

3. RESOLUTION ON DIOCESAN CENTER

This has been a yearlong process. There are 2 viable options rent or purchase there are none currently owned that is suitable.

1. Video presentation
 - a. Asking price: \$490,000
 - b. Many thanks to Alex White and his professional expertise.
2. Mat Cindy (chair): reminder that this report fulfills a resolution from last year's assembly that tasks the Diocesan Council to provide a report on feasible scenarios for a diocesan center.
 - a. Kathleen Casserly: what are all the things that could take place at the location?
 - i. Fr Mosher: Diocesan assemblies, etc.
 - b. Fr John Eissman: How does this compare to where Archbishop Nikon lived?
 - i. Fr Kreta: hard to compare. Housing was split between his two dioceses, but he really had no office space. And it is very centrally located in the diocese, near Hartford airport.
 - c. Fr Patrick Burns: what is the next step? Do we have to vote on anything?
 - i. Fr Joshua: No there is nothing to vote on today. This fulfills a resolution from last year's assembly.
 - ii. Fr Kreta: we have never had anything that could even be identified as a diocesan office, let alone a place for the bishop to live. And once we get a bishop, we will need to provide these things. Beyond that, working on this resolution opened our eyes to what the possibilities could be, and what our responsibilities should be for supporting a new bishop and for supporting the future life and growth of the diocese. This report gives us food for thought. We are not in a position to make a decision about purchasing a property because we only have a locum tenens, but it is good to begin thinking about the options.
 - d. Susan Karalekas: can we sit on this and pray about it?

- i. Yes. And if this property is taken, then we could look elsewhere. This report gives us a vision.
- e. Inga Leonova: can we further the work of this committee to continue working on a wide scope financial analysis/impact of moving forward with a property like this?
- f. Bob Popadic: on why a lending institution would probably not give the diocese a mortgage.
- g. John Kruchok: does Fr John Kreta feel that this would be a good facility for a Chancellor, ad in particular that you personally need such a place?
 - i. Fr John: It's not the case of what I need but is a vision for the diocese for the image that it wants to display. Is "Fr John's cell phone" a satisfactory answer to the question "so where is your diocese?"
 1. Fr John mentioned the vision of a monastic community.
- h. Fr John Hopko: was our church in Hartford and its facility investigated as a possibility?
 - i. Fr Kreta: Yes
 - ii. Fr Hopko: it is a much cheaper option! Plus, as Bob Popadic states in his report, it is not advisable to purchase property without a substantial increase in parish fair share burden, especially as we are trying to fully fund a bishop. Also what we really need for a new bishop is a full-time, fully paid staff.
- i. Joe Pecevich: was the property you looked at as a legal residence, or was it used as one? We should be concerned about mixed uses.

Alex White: we would have to look into it for certain.
- j. Rick Comshaw: suggested tabling the discussion.

XIII. 2023 DIOCESAN BUDGET AND ASSESSMENT

Rdr John Skrobat, Diocesan Treasurer, presented the proposed budget and assessment package for the upcoming financial year. Copies of the material distributed are on file with the Diocesan Secretary.

Rdr John Skrobat explained the Fare Share distribution for 2023.

1. Questions

- a. Pdn Paul Nimcheck: Are the Bishop's expenses listed as if we did have a Bishop?

Rdr John: YES

Pdn Paul: Good. This ill show us what it means to try and support a full time, Bishop.

- b. Metropolitan Tikhon: question about an increase to stipends to chancellor, deans, secretary, and treasurer since we continue to only have a locum tenens

2. Fr Joshua: (because the budget has already been moved and seconded by the Diocesan council): AMENDMENT to the Budget

- a. Resolved: the \$18,000 allocated in the proposed budget for a bishop's assistant be dispersed at the diocesan council for the benefit fo the persons and work for the chancellor, deans, secretary, treasurer, and any other officers appointed to fulfill the work of the diocese. Seconded by Fr Patrick Burns.

APPROVED (one nay, two abstentions)

3. Back to a discussion of the amended proposed budget

a. John Skrobat: just on mechanics: we would keep the \$18,000 on a line such as “bishop’s assistant” then when the DC carves it up, the expenses would be added to the lines for the officers (Creating a deficit there but leaving a surplus on the line for the bishop’s assistant.)

APPROVED (unanimous)

XIV. **ELECTIONS TO THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL**

Fr Joshua Mosher, presented the following ballot of candidates from the Nominations and Resolutions Committee, listed below:

Open Position: One (1) Clergy-at-Large (3-year term) Fr Steven Voytovich

Open Positions: Two (2) Laity-at-Large (3-year term) Rick Comshaw, and Sdn Nicholas Medynski

One replacement Laity-at-Large (2-year term) Claudia Peters

Open Position: One (1) Metropolitan Council Clergy-at-Large (3-year term) Fr Patrick Burns

Open Position: One (1) Diocesan Auditor [non-voting] (3-year term) Irene Vassos

Elections were approved with one abstention.

XV. **RESOLUTIONS**

Investment Committee Motion:

That when there is an operating loss at yearend, that the Diocesan Council be authorized, but not required, to transfer in the following fiscal year up to 5% of the August 31st yearend balance from the Endowment (Fidelity account) to the one or more operating accounts.

Motion was approved with one abstention.

Two others were submitted but the resolutions committee determined that they were not in the competence of the Assembly but will be given to His Beatitude Met. Tikhon so he can address the issues.

One relates to the war in Ukraine. Metropolitan Tikhon says that a statement from the Holy Synod will be issued shortly, addressing not just the war, but also the question of the defense and support of the war by certain ecclesiastical authorities in the Orthodox world.

Motion passed to thank the parish and committees at Springfield, VT and Claremont, NH for a wonderful assembly.

XVI. **NEW BUSINESS INSTALLATION OF NEW COUNCIL**

Prayer Service for the blessing and installation of the newly elected Diocesan Council was held presided by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon.

Invitation to host by Ansonia, CT for 2025

XVII. NEXT DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

2023 Diocesan Assembly: New Haven, CT (Holy Transfiguration)
2024 Diocesan Assembly: Cumberland, RI (Dormition of the Virgin Mary)
2025 Diocesan Assembly: ?

XVIII. ASSEMBLY ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the assembly was made at 1:57 p.m. by Alexia Tassmer. With the singing of “It is Truly Meet.”

Respectfully submitted,

The 2022 Diocesan Assembly Secretariats:

Alexia Tassmer, Diocesan Secretary
Fr Theophan Whitfield
Mary Jane Kubeck-Rodgers