

**(Draft) Minutes of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Assembly of the Diocese of New England  
Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Springfield, MA  
October 28-29, 2016**

The Assembly gathered at Ss. Peter & Paul Church, Springfield, MA and opened with a Service of Prayer celebrated by His Eminence, Archbishop NIKON at 10:10 AM on Friday morning, October 28, 2016 and the meeting was called to order at 10:45 AM.

**I. ELECTION OF ASSEMBLY OFFICERS**

His Eminence, Archbishop NIKON and Fr. John Kreta, Chancellor of the Diocese of New England, chaired the election of Assembly Officers, as follows:

Clergy Vice Chair – Fr Theophan Whitfield, nominated by the Diocesan Council. Fr. James Parnell closed nominations.

Lay Vice Chair – Mat. Cindy Voytovich, nominated by the Diocesan Council. Fr. Joshua Mosher closed nominations.

Secretariat – Alexia Tassmer (the Diocesan Secretary) and Fr. David Koles were nominated by the Diocesan Council. Nominated from the floor was Fr. Joshua Mosher was nominated. Fr. Michael Korolev closed nominations.

Credentials & Tellers Committee – David Zavednak and Prdn. Paul Nimchek, nominated by the Diocesan Council, Rdr. Timothy Tassmer, nominated from the floor. Fr. John Kreta closed nominations.

Nominations and Resolutions Committee – Fr. John Hopko and Fr. James Parnell, nominated by the Diocesan Council. Edward Capowich, nominated from the floor. Rdr. Steven Bradford closed nominations.

The slate was approved unanimously. Motion passed.

Fr. John Kreta then read a Resolution from the Diocese of the South that was passed at their Diocesan Assembly thanking our Archbishop NIKON as their Locum Tenens for guiding them during their time of vacancy.

Fr. John Kreta then turned the meeting over to Fr. Theophan Whitfield.

**II. HIERARCH'S REPORT**

His Eminence, Archbishop NIKON presented the following written report.

**OPENING QUOTE**

Fr Alexander Schmemmann wrote:

*“Chrismation gives us the positive power and grace to be Christians, to act as Christians to build together the church of God and be responsible participants in the life of the church. In this sacrament we pray that the newly baptized be: ‘an honorable member of God’s Church,’ ‘a consecrated vessel,’ ‘a child of light,’ ‘an heir of God’s kingdom,’ that ‘having preserved the gift of the Holy Spirit and increased the measure of grace committed unto him, he may receive the prize of his high calling and be numbered with the first born whose names are written in heaven’”.*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Clergy and Laity in the Orthodox Church" (Orthodox Life, 1) (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1959).  
<http://www.schmemmann.org/byhim/clergyandlaityinthechurch.html>

Brothers and sisters, as we gather together to reflect on our life as the Church, we do so with a clear focus on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we gather as members of the Body of Christ. One of the key questions for us is how do we allow the gift of the Holy Spirit to burn brightly within all of us? In what ways are we truly living out our vocation to be children of light?

### **Report Introduction**

Since my consecration in 2002 it has been my practice to write two annual reports: one for the Diocesan Assembly of New England and one for the Assembly of the Albanian Archdiocese. During the four and a half years that I served as *locum tenens* of the Diocese of the South I also wrote a third annual report. This year, since much of the information I shall report pertains to both the Diocese of New England and the Albanian Archdiocese I decided that I would streamline the process and write one report that I would share with both Dioceses.

The Diocese of New England and the Albanian Archdiocese continue to work closely together. We have participated in each others' assemblies; members of the Albanian Archdiocese continue to participate in "Youth Rally," our one week Youth Camp of the Diocese of New England; and by doing this we allow relationships and collaboration to grow and flourish.

During the past years our chancellors, deans, and treasurers have been in communication, often on a monthly basis. Therefore, I felt for the sake of expediency and as an aid to build up closer relationships that one report would suffice. In a few places items in the report may pertain to one diocese or the other but even in this way we are blessed to stay informed of what is occurring in our sister diocese.

### **HOLY SYNOD**

Metropolitan Tikhon celebrated the Sunday of Orthodoxy Divine Liturgy at the Phanar in Constantinople with Patriarch Bartholomew along with several members of the Patriarch's synod. Although there were mixed interpretations about the invitation it was a first for any of our OCA primates, and personally I believe it was a positive first step.

The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America met at the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Monastery in Michigan for our annual retreat which was a time of spiritual renewal interspersed with business meetings. The Synod met with personnel from SMPAC (Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee) and ORSMA (Office of Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations) to review the work of these two departments. The committee chairs introduced what they referred to as "role play" where, difficult situations can be simulated in a safe environment, and participants can learn how to properly respond. We were also updated on current and pending allegations. The goal for both SMPAC and ORSMA is to have a mental health or social work professional serve as a Victim's Advocate in each diocese. This demonstrates our commitment to the impartial investigation of sexual misconduct allegations, and minimizes the possibility for a conflict of interest that might arise if clergy investigate brother clergy.

It is sometimes confusing these days when everything appears to be abbreviated and only initials or letters are used. ORSMA, spelled O-R-S-M-A stands for the Office for Review of Sexual Misconduct Allegations and SMPAC, spelled S-M-P-A-C stands for Sexual Misconduct Policy Advisory Committee. I sometimes wonder if for the sake of expediency my own title may be reduced from Archbishop of Boston, New England and the Albanian Archdiocese to simply, B-O-B "BOB", for short, standing for Bishop of Boston.

The Synod also discussed procedures that are to be followed in so-called C-I-S (Clergy in Crisis) situations such as alcohol or substance abuse.

In addition, His Beatitude presented a draft document outlining the procedures for the operation of the Holy Synod. The development of this document is in accordance with the OCA Statutes Article II.5aa. I anticipate that during our upcoming Synod meetings we will be viewing these policies as His Beatitude develops them. Metropolitan Tikhon also reiterated the four-pillar plan that he presented at the AAC: Spiritual Life; Outreach; Clergy Health; and Seminary.

Having an opportunity to address these important matters in a more relaxed, retreat style atmosphere was quite beneficial as it gave us an opportunity to reflect on, discuss and pray about these matters in a way that is not always possible during the limited timeframe of regular Synod Meetings.

### **EDUCATION AND OUTREACH**

During one of the earlier meetings of the Holy Synod this past year Fr. Chad Hatfield reported on the operating costs for St Vladimir's Seminary. He stated that it costs the seminary approximately \$70,000 to \$75,000 per year to educate each seminarian. However, in order to limit tuition costs for the students, tuition is only \$20,000 to \$25,000 per year. Thus, he urged dioceses and parishes to consider sponsoring seminarians as well as including contributions to the seminaries in diocesan annual budgets.

Both the Diocese of New England and the Albanian Archdiocese have scholarship programs for seminary students. The Diocese of New England also includes contributions to all three seminaries in our annual budget.

The Student Fund of the Albanian Archdiocese established in 1947 supports numerous programs such as OCMC mission programs as well as full seminary tuition for men following a call to ordained ministry, in addition church school teachers' seminars and other lay leader programs have been supported by the student fund. The Archdiocese recently added to their budget for the coming year, funds for post graduate studies for clergy. An example of this would be the new hybrid DMin program at St. Vladimir's that uses online education. This was considered as fulfilling part of the OCA's mandate for clergy enrichment programs in each diocese.

The Parish Grant program in the Diocese of New England is especially beneficial to parish communities engaged in outreach programs. A good number of our parishes have found this financial support beneficial and it is our hope that more of our parishes would avail themselves of this opportunity in the coming year.

### **ORDINATIONS and PASTORAL CHANGES**

During this past year Fr Joseph Gall was ordained to the Holy Diaconate and Priesthood and was assigned to St. Nicholas Church in Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

Dn. John Mikitish was ordained to the Holy Diaconate and attached to Holy Transfiguration in New Haven, CT. We anticipate his ordination to the priesthood in November. He plans to continue his education in the New Haven area and during this period will continue to be attached to Holy Transfiguration in New Haven.

Fr. John Pawelchak was granted retirement and was transferred to the omophorion of Bishop Paul of Chicago and the Midwest.

Dn. Mircea Geana, attached to Holy Resurrection in Claremont, NH was ordained to the Holy Priesthood and he remains attached to Holy Resurrection Church.

Jason Green and Robert Ngjela of Saint George Cathedral were tonsured as readers. Jason will be continuing his studies at Holy Cross Seminary in preparation for ordination to the diaconate.

Fr. Nicholas Dellerman was transferred from St. Nicholas in Norwich, CT. to Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Philadelphia, PA in the Albanian Archdiocese.

Fr. Scott Mitchell was received into our diocese and he is attached to Christ the Savior Mission in Maine.

With sadness I note the repose of, Fr. Walter Smith who was serving the Nativity of the Virgin Mary parish in Waterbury, CT when he fell asleep in the Lord this past May. Clergy from both the Connecticut and Boston deaneries participated in the services for Fr. Walter and he was laid to rest in the parish's cemetery.

Protodeacon Basil Safchuk who was in retirement in Bethesda, MD, fell asleep in the Lord in July. Funeral services were conducted by his son Fr. Gregory Safchuk at St. Nicholas Church in Salem, MA where Protodeacon Basil served for many years. Both local and diocesan clergy participated in the services.

Priestersha Viola Soter wife of Fr. Michael Soter fell asleep in the Lord this past July. Although retired in Florida, the services were held at St Mary's Church in Worcester, MA, Priestersha's home town. Archdiocesan and local clergy participated in the services for Priestersha Viola. May their memory be eternal.

### YOUTH

As I mentioned earlier in my report, Youth Rally, our one-week summer camp was well attended by participants from both diocese.

In addition, the Syndesmos gathering for Orthodox Youth was held in Slovika this year and Peter Hopko, president of our OCF chapter at UCONN, the University of Connecticut represented our youth. His report is in your assembly booklet.

Sydney Dionis was one of four girls from Worcester that went to volunteer at the Orthodox Summer Camp in Elbassan, Albania.

Crossroads, the Orthodox Program for College and High School students from around the country were hosted at both Holy Trinity Cathedral and Saint George Cathedral.

### NEW DOCUMENTS

In order to address issues that may arise from recent changes to marriage laws, the document, *Sincerely Held Religious Belief* (SHRB)<sup>2</sup> was prepared and written by Judge E. R. Lanier, General Counsel of the OCA. This document articulates in legal terms the OCA's position on marriage. The OCA has been advised that having a document of this kind is essential in light of the Supreme Court decision on same sex marriage as a preventative measure for protecting the interests of parishes and dioceses in the event of potential lawsuits that might arise regarding the rental of parish facilities. There was much discussion about this matter during a meeting of the Holy Synod since many parishes rent their hall facilities as a business or for other purposes such as dinners and meetings. In one case a non-Orthodox couple wanted to rent the nave of a church because the photos would look beautiful for their wedding album.

The document articulates the right of a parish to decide to whom it will rent its facilities, and for what purpose. It also articulates the role of the bishop in approving the rental of parish facilities. For instance, if you wish to rent your hall for a meeting of the local town council or a wedding reception, the bishop may give his blessing to allow such a gathering.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://oca.org/holy-synod/statements/stewards-of-the-oca-2016-saint-herman-appeal/statement-of-the-holy-synod-of-the-oca-on-sincerely-held-religious-beliefs>

In as much as it is a preventative measure and does not really affect the operation in any of our parishes, I urge our parish councils to sign the document.

### **PARISH BY-LAWS**

In the early '50's the Albanian Archdiocesan parishes ratified a uniform constitution of the parishes of the Archdiocese. This was not the case in the territorial dioceses of the OCA. The updated statutes of the OCA, which were approved at the last AAC, require parish by- laws of every parish in the Diocese of New England to be updated and ratified as well as the by-laws and rules of procedure for the Diocese of New England itself. A committee was formed to aid the parishes in this endeavor. I wish to commend the members of the committee for their extensive work in this area.

Presently the committee has completed the recommended updates for the diocesan by-laws. However, only six parishes have availed themselves of the expertise of our committee, and only three of our clergy have made inquiries. It is important to note that the Statutes of the OCA now require that parish by-laws be updated and ratified by the end of 2017. The process for ratification of parish by-laws is as follows:

1. The parish submits its by-laws to the Diocesan By-Law Committee for review according to the updated Statutes of the OCA.
2. The Committee works with the parish to make any necessary recommendations to ensure that parish by-laws conform to the Statutes of the OCA.
3. Once the Committee has confirmed that the parish by-laws conform to the OCA Statutes, they shall be submitted to the Archbishop for his blessing.

If your parish has not yet begun this process, the by law committee is ready to offer assistance.

### **BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Both the Albanian Archdiocese and the Diocese of New England now use the same company to perform background checks on parish employees and volunteers. With this new company individuals can approve background checks through an online service. This dramatically simplifies the process by providing direct interaction with the background check company and adds another level of privacy eliminating the necessity to keep hard copies on file.

At our meeting last week the Holy Synod chose this company as the official OCA background company. As we have agreed in New England, the Diocese will pay for background checks on priests and deacons and lower ranks of the clergy, but the parish will pay for background checks that are required for other individuals. I recommended the same procedure and policy be used in the Albanian Archdiocese. The costs run between \$25 and \$40 per report depending upon the level of background check needed. In order to streamline the process both dioceses have established a department of background checks. David Zavednak and Fr Mark Doku chair the departments in the respective dioceses.

### **PSP COMPLIANCE**

The Policies, Standards and Procedures<sup>3</sup> dealing with sexual misconduct provide the basic framework for protecting those whom God has called us to serve, especially our children. Thus, it is essential for all who minister, serve and volunteer in the Church to take the time to read and understand the PSPs. Also, each member of the parish council is required to read the PSPs. In order to document that this requirement has been met, the minutes of the parish council must reflect that the PSPs have been read and that all Parish Council members have signed a document stating that they have read the PSPs. The OCA is unequivocally committed to protecting every member of the parish and ensuring safe environments. Formal acknowledgement of the PSPs is the first step towards protecting those we are called to serve as well as protecting the parish should any incident occur. The reason for reading and understanding the

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<sup>3</sup> <https://oca.org/about/sexual-misconduct>

PSPs is that it protects the church should any litigation occur. Without a formal affirmation of the PSPs and documented efforts to implement them, the parish, and the diocese would be even more vulnerable to litigation and criminal prosecution should any abuse occur.

Therefore, I urge that all parish council members, both those who are long-serving and those who are newly appointed, read and understand the PSPs during the first meeting or prior to the first meeting of the parish council. The purpose for reading them each year is that the PSPs are "a work in progress" that constantly seeks to protect the innocent and provide safe environments in a changing world. Thus, changes may have occurred since the last printing. This is especially true since both dioceses encompass multiple states and the procedures required may differ from state to state.

In the past both the full and short version of the document has been distributed to our clergy, yet we still have some that have not signed a form indicating compliance. As a sign of your commitment to providing a safe environment within Christ's Holy Church, please read the PSPs and sign the document attesting that you have done so. Do it for your children, for our children.

### **FINANCIAL INVESTMENT COMMITTEES**

During the past few years both dioceses received substantial funds due in some cases to unfortunate circumstances, such as the sale of the former property of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Parish in Chelsea, MA in the Diocese of New England; and the fire at the Albanian parish of St. John the Baptist in Boston. In such situations our responsibility is to wisely distribute and manage these financial gifts to support parish growth and outreach programs in our respective dioceses.

Financial investment committees of the Diocesan Council of New England and the Albanian Archdiocesan Council presented their prospectus and policies which represent a conservative approach to investments that embody the best practices of good stewardship. Both proposals were approved by the respective diocesan councils.

Both Financial Investment Committees are to be commended for their efforts to implement robust policies and procedures to wisely use these gifts for the up building of the Church.

### **COLA**

For the Diocese of New England according to a vote of our Diocesan Assembly the COLA adjustment for 2017 would be the highest of three indexes from the Board of Labor Statistics for September 2016.

- US City average is .8 %
- Northeastern Urban average is .8 %
- Boston, Brocton, Nashua CPI is 1.5 %

Therefore the COLA adjustment for the Diocese of New England 2017 is 1.5%

As of the date of this report the Albanian Archdiocese does not have a formal COLA policy; however a number of our parishes are using the New England Diocese policy as a guideline.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

Sts Peter and Paul Albanian Orthodox Church in Philadelphia celebrated their centennial year.

St John the Baptist Church that suffered the loss of their church building due to a fire observed the third annual commemoration of the fire and have responded to God's call to a new stage in the life of their community. The parishioners have invested the insurance benefit and the proceeds from the sale of the property in the work of the Church throughout the Albanian Archdiocese as well as at St George Cathedral. Celebrating the contribution that the St. John the Baptist community has made, the Theophany Chapel located in Saint George Cathedral was renamed the St John the Baptist Chapel and the parishioners have formally become members of Saint George Cathedral.

It was a meaningful and celebratory year for many parishes in the Diocese of New England as Holy Annunciation in Maynard, MA; St. Nicholas in Pittsfield, MA; Holy Trinity in Willimantic, CT; and Ss. Peter and Paul in Springfield, MA all celebrated their centennial anniversary of witnessing to the Gospel. In addition, Christ the Savior Church in Southbury, CT celebrated their 25th anniversary.

### **PERSONAL HIGHLIGHT**

I wish to share a personal highlight that occurred during the assembly of the Diocese of the South this past July. As you may be aware the Holy Synod assigned Bishop Alexander of the Bulgarian Diocese as the ruling hierarch of the Diocese of the South.

I was unable to participate in the enthronement of Bishop Alexander since it coincided with the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Christ the Savior in Southbury, CT but I was invited to attend the first Assembly of the Diocese of the South with their new ruling hierarch this past July, in Wilmington, NC.

I was quite honored and humbled as well as pleasantly surprised that during the Assembly the first resolution that was passed unanimously and blessed by both His Beatitude Tikhon and Bishop Alexander of the South and the Bulgarian diocese was a resolution recognizing my service to the diocese as locum tenens, and giving me honorary membership in the Diocese of the South.

I believe this is a first in Orthodox history that a ruling hierarch of a diocese would also be given the honor as a member of another diocese. I believe this speaks well of the Diocese of New England and the Albanian Archdiocese who were so gracious to support me during the years that I served three dioceses, and it also fosters ongoing relationships as I have the opportunity to visit parishes in the South. It was a blessing for me to be with the faithful of the Diocese of the South during their first Assembly with their new ruling bishop who succeeds Archbishop Dmitri of blessed memory. Although not specifically ordered to do so, in light of this extraordinary honor I feel obligated to visit the South during the upcoming winter months.

### **THANKS AND RECOGNITION**

Fr. Joseph Gallick and Audra Sullivan have been invaluable assets to the smooth operation of our Archdiocese. Both are tireless competent and efficient. One does not realize how much responsibility is involved in the operation of a diocese while maintaining confidentiality in sometimes very sensitive matters. I more than appreciate their dedication along with that of our chancellor Fr Arthur Liolin. By definition a chancellor's responsibility is to act in the absence of the bishop. Inasmuch as my responsibilities take me away for long periods of time he is usually the contact person for our clergy especially when dealing with sensitive matters. I am most appreciative of his attention to these issues in my absence.

In New England I would be at a loss without the expertise and experience of Fr. John Kreta our Chancellor, along with our deans Fr. Vasily Lickwar in the Boston Deanery, Fr. David Koles in the Connecticut Deanery and Fr. Peter Carmichael in the Northern Deanery. I sometimes feel I lead a sheltered life as our diocese is run so smoothly; not so much as a result of my efforts but because our clergy are dedicated mentors to new clergy, and our deans, and chancellors are seasoned men with many years of experience who are sensitive to both the needs of parishes and the needs of our clergy and faithful. They serve the Church and our clergy and their families with the benefit of both experience and sensitivity.

I am in contact on a daily basis with Fr. John Kreta who has years of experience serving our mission of All Saints of America and has served as our chancellor for the last decade with expertise and sensitivity for the clergy and faithful in our diocese as well as keeping me abreast of important issues that arise while simultaneously sparing me from some of the mundane responsibilities that come across his desk.

Fr. Liolin in the Albanian Archdiocese has served for more than forty years dealing with archdiocesan and pastoral issues as well as international and immigrant issues that are so common in the ethnic dioceses of the OCA. We are more than fortunate to have them in leadership responsibilities and I consider them a gift to me personally and to our respective dioceses.

**CLOSING QUOTE**

Permit me to close with another quote from Fr. Alexander Schmemmann:

*"All prayers in the Orthodox Church are always written in terms of the plural we. We offer, we pray, we thank, we adore, we enter, we ascend, we receive. The layman is in a very direct way the co-celebrant of the priest, the latter offering to God the prayers of the Church, representing all people, speaking on their behalf."*<sup>4</sup>

Every last one of us, from the newly baptized infant to the Archbishop are co-laborers in the Vineyard of the Lord. We are called to live as God's family, as children of light, adopted sons and daughters of the King of Glory. May God bless, guide and strengthen us in our work.

**III. 2015 ASSEMBLY MINUTES:**

**Credential's Report** presented by David Zavednak: as of 11:29 PM

<u>Voting Attendees</u>		<u>Non-Voting Attendees</u>	
Hierarchs	1	Observers, Guests, Alternates (9 observers, 2 guests.)	
Clergy Delegates	26		
Lay Delegates	18		
Diocesan Council	<u>9</u>		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Grand Total Voting and Non-Voting</b>		<b>65</b>	

A motion to accept the 2015 Diocesan Assembly Minutes, as presented, was made by Ed Capowich seconded by Fr. James Parnell. The motion carried.

**IV. PRESENTATION BY FR. JONATHAN IVANOFF:**

The Director of ONCD (Orthodox Natural Church Development) led a discussion on growing the church.

Fr. Ivanoff began with a series of sobering statistics, with the headline, "New England, we have a problem."

Discussed was The State of the Church, church attendance of all religions, The State of Theology, Factors in the slide of Mainline Denomination, How are we Different, The importance of Religion.

The Church of Yesterday compared to the Church of Today.

The Parish Life Cycle and what must take place for Revitalization, intervention, and if a restart is needed and how to accomplish this.

The session ended at 12:40 PM to break for Lunch.

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<sup>4</sup> "Clergy and Laity in the Orthodox Church" (Orthodox Life, 1) (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 1959).  
<http://www.schmemmann.org/byhim/clergyandlaityinthechurch.html>

Session II Began at 1:40 PM

Fr. Theophan Whitfield called for a nomination to the Credentials & Tellers Committee to replace Fr. James Parnell since he will be running for a position and the By-Laws state this is a conflict of interest. Fr. James Parnell nominated Michael Danchak. Anne Wilkinson closed nominations. Motion passed.

V. **REPORTS**

Fr. Theophan Whitfield, Clergy Vice Chair, asked for brief comments from those presenting reports.

**PARISH GRANT INITIATIVE:**

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek on behalf of the PGI thanked the other members of the committee for their help. This year's recipients are: Three Saints, Ansonia who received a grant for Vacation Church School which is a week long day school at the Three Saints Park in Bethany. This is the fourth year in receiving this grant. Participants come from some 8 parishes with 52 children, not all Orthodox, who attended and the theme was Saints of North America. The day is 9 to 4 beginning and ending with prayer. The week ends with Vespers sung by the children and a Lenten meal.

All Saints, Hartford received a grant for numerous projects to help veterans throughout the Greater Hartford area. They have partnered with the Chrysalis Center. They are building a rapport with the veterans and the center, building long term friendships. The staff tells them how much it means for volunteers to come each week. Meanwhile, the program allows members of All Saints to put the Gospel into practice.

The new form for next year's Grant is posted on the web.

**Credential's Report** presented by Prdn. Paul Nimchek: as of 2:00 PM

<u>Voting Attendees</u>		<u>Non-Voting Attendees</u>	
Hierarchs	1	Observers, Guests, Alternates	11 (9 observers, 2 guest)
Clergy Delegates	26		
Lay Delegates	19		
Diocesan Council	<u>9</u>		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Grand Total Voting and Non-Voting</b>		<b>66</b>	

Fr. John Hopko moved, Fr. James Parnell seconded, to wait to accept all reports at one time. Motion passed.

**BOSTON DEANERY:**

Fr. Vasily Lickwar, Dormition of the Theotokos, Cumberland and Dean of the Boston Deanery presented a written report on the activities of the deanery.

**CONNECTICUT DEANERY:**

Fr. David Koles, Holy Trinity, New Britain and Dean of the Connecticut Deanery presented a written report about the activities of the 17 parishes in the deanery.

**NORTHERN DEANERY:**

Fr. Peter Carmichael, Holy Trinity, Springfield, VT and Dean of the Northern Deanery presented a written report on the activities of the deanery. Along with the welcoming and introduction of Fr. Mitchell, the new pastor of the Bangor mission.

**METROPOLITAN COUNCIL:**

Fr. Robert Dick, Clergy Representative and David Zavednak, Lay Representative presented a written report, on file with the secretary.

**ONE / COMMUNICATIONS:**

Fr. Joshua Mosher thanked everyone who has contributed to the paper in the past and mentioned how he edits a lot but writes very little. Again he appealed to everyone to PLEASE send things; articles, pictures, news, etc. to Fr. Joshua. He also asked that all clergy or parish reps visit with Alexia Tassmer before going home to get their current address list in order to make additions and corrections.

**ONE STEWARDS:**

Protodeacon Paul Nimchek on behalf of the ONE Stewards Committee stated that for the fourth time we have met our budgeted to the amount of \$22K. The biggest thanks go to His Eminence for contributing \$500/month to ONE Stewards. He also thanked all who contributed especially the members of the Bishop's Circle (nine years) with 16 total members. NB had the largest amount \$3500K+ and Terryville had the most donors! All Saints, Salisbury, Holy Resurrection, Claremont, NH all had the largest increase in parish giving. During the DL those contributions made in memory of departed loved ones will be remembered.

**SCHOLARSHIP:**

John Skrobat stated that the scholarship is open to any male or female going to the seminaries \$1500 per person per semester. Total scholarships of \$7500 on two recipients, Dn. John Mikitish who has completed studies at St. Vladimir's and Moses Lock at St. Tikhon's.

**YOUTH RALLY:**

Fr. John Hopko presented a written report. Thanked the members of the diocese for funding this program which is the single most expensive in the diocese. Rally again was held again at the St. Methodius Metropolis Faith & Heritage Center in Contoocook, NH. The children together with the adult councilors get a tremendous blessing from the week of prayer and fellowship. There was 100% return this year from last. Again the Rally Staff was outstanding. He thanked Fr. Dennis Rhodes, Fr. Sergius Halvorsen, for their assistance, Fr. James Parnell who was a special presenter, and Fr. John Bacon for the Youth Protection training. Also, thanks to David Zavednak for doing all the Background Checks.

**BACKGROUND CHECK DEPARTMENT:**

David Zavednak, Director of the Diocesan Background Check Department presented a written report and commented briefly about this new service within the diocese. Fr. John Kreta reiterated that it is mandated. 160 people have already been done. If you have done them on your own please give the names of people, company used, and date done to David Zavednak.

**PARISH BY-LAWS:**

David Zavednak, Chairman of the Diocesan By-Law Committee summarized the work of the Committee. The members are David Zavednak, Fr. John Kreta, Chancellor, Fr. James Parnell,

Mat. Cindy Voytovich and Alexia Tassmer, Diocesan Secretary. We have received from 11 parishes as of this date. A “Boiler plate” is available to assist parishes if they wish to utilize. Please remember that we only have until December 2017 for ALL to be in compliance and it is not a quick process.

**INVESTMENT COMMITTEE:**

Robert Popadic, Chairman of the Investment Committee was not present but a written report was included in our Assembly books. His Eminence appointed this committee of Robert Popadic, John Skrobat, Diocesan Treasurer and Prdn. Paul Nimchek. Prdn. Paul Nimchek, committee member, commented briefly about the work of this committee.

Sdn. John Barone moved, Sdn. Lawrence Johnson seconded, to all reports as presented. Motion passed.

**VI. AUDITOR’S REPORT**

Fr. James Parnell 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 Fr. Robert Arida, seconded by Fr. Joshua Mosher, that the Auditor’s Report be accepted. The motion passed unanimously.

**VII. TREASURER’S REPORT**

John Skrobat, Diocesan Treasurer, presented the Treasurer’s Report

**STATEMENT OF ASSETS:**

Checkbook balance (8/31/2016): \$19,643.95

**BUDGET REPORT:**

Total Actual Income for 2016 (fiscal year ending 08/31/16):	\$598,212.06
Total Actual Expense	<u>\$336,183.89</u>
<b>Total Actual Income over Expenses</b>	<b>\$262,028.17</b>

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

Prdn. Paul Nimchek moved and Rdr. Steven Bradford seconded the acceptance of the Treasurer’s report. Motion passed.

**VIII. 2017 DIOCESAN BUDGET AND ASSESSMENT**

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

Secretary. John explained the Fare Share distribution for 2017. The budget is slightly lower than last year's. On the expense side it is equal to last year's. He reviewed the increase and decrease line items explaining how the finance committee arrived at these figures. John also explained the diocesan population sheet and the FS distribution for the year 2017. Our actual numbers has decreased by 31 members.

**Motion:** Fr. Robert Dick moved, Fr. John Eissman seconded, to accept the 2017 Budget as presented. Motion passed.

John also reminded everyone about the mandatory COLA of 1.5% for 2017 and asked everyone to look at the Fair Share Assessment page for their parishes' 2017 contribution.

**IX. SECOND PART OF THE PRESENTATION BY FR. JONATHAN IVANOFF:**

The Director of ONCD (Orthodox Natural Church Development) led a discussion on health of a parish and growing the church.

God gives the growth. What are we doing to prevent God from growing His church?

Fr. Ivanoff said we have been incorrectly focused on growth programs. Programs will not grow your church. How can we expect fruit from a tree without tending to the roots? We need to change questions, from "How can we get more people to come to church?" Or "What can I do to make our church grow?" to "What we are doing that prevents the church from growing?" Begin with the understanding that the church would grow naturally. The "All by itself" Principle. Sower casts the seed on the ground. On good soil, begins to grow all by itself. Like the kingdom of God. God wants to grow kingdom and He is the only one that can. "I am the vine you are the branches. Apart from me you can do nothing." Not a little not those others things. Nothing. As long as a church is connected to the Source, it can do all things.

Fr. Ivanoff then introduced the approach of Natural Church Development: Identify principles and standards of health, Empowering leadership, Gift based ministry, Fervent spirituality, Effective structures, Inspiring worship, Holistic fellowship groups, Need-oriented evangelism, and Loving relationships. Identify minimum factors limiting church health and thus growth. But he gave a warning: Revitalization is a process that takes seven years typically once turnarounds concertedly begin.

To whom are we ministering?

Fr.. Ivanoff illustrated a series of concentric circles, representing participants in a parish. A small Core at the center. Then the Committed—not as active and regular as core. Congregation around the committed, even less active. Community at the margins—Both neighborhood and connections to center. Our parish ministry is to expand each ring. Bring everyone to the heart, which is Christ.

He concluded by inviting all to visit [Oncd.us](http://Oncd.us).

In answer to a question, he explained that the church health team for a parish self-assessment is run by laity. Five or six on the team, including the priest. Survey by thirty. Health team needs to be free to devote all their time to this versus other church responsibility. Often from committed rather than the core.

The session closed with prayer at 4:40 PM. Following all gathered in church to celebrate Vespers and then traveled to the Sheraton Hotel in Springfield, MA for dinner and fellowship.

**\*\*\* Overnight Break \*\*\***

After the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Saturday morning, October 29, 2016, commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ss. Peter & Paul Church, Springfield, MA and followed by a brunch in the parish social hall, the Diocesan Assembly reconvened for Session III in the church at 11:53 AM with the singing of “O Heavenly King.”

Mat. Cindy Voytovich, Lay Vice Chair, opened Session III.

**X. OLD BUSINESS**

Fr. Theophan Whitfield reported on the OCA Mission School lectures in Minneapolis this past summer. This was the second year that this was held. Both clergy and laity from across the USA who have put together missions gathered to learn about establishing a mission as well as having a missionary spirit within an established parish. It gives you an up close look at the mission field in our land.

Fr. Steven Voytovich was asked to present the last certificate from the Choir Directors Class and it was given to Anne Wilkinson of Christ the Savior Church, Southbury, CT. He also put on his Dean hat and thanked everyone for their support for St. Tikhon’s Seminary.

**Credential’s Report** presented by David Zavednak at 12:08 PM

<u>Voting Attendees</u>		<u>Non-Voting Attendees</u>	
Hierarchs	1	Observers, Guests, Alternates	9 (6 observers, 3 Guest)
Clergy Delegates	22		
Lay Delegates	16		
Diocesan Council	<u>9</u>		
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Grand Total Voting and Non-Voting</b>			<b>57</b>

**XI. ELECTIONS TO THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL**

Fr. John Hopko, presented the following ballot of candidates from the Nominations and Resolutions Committee, listed below:

**Open Position: One (1) Clergy-at-Large Representative to Diocesan Council**  
Nominated Candidate from the Nominations Committee: Fr. Theophan Whitfield.

**Replacement Position: One (1) Clergy-at-Large Representative to Diocesan Council**  
Nominated Candidate from the Nominations Committee: Fr. Joseph Gall.

**Motion:** Fr. Michael Westerberg moved, second by Fr. Joshua Mosher that the nominees be accepted by acclamation. Motion passed.

**Open Position: One (1) Clergy Metropolitan Council Representative**

Nominated Candidate from the Nominations Committee: Fr. James Parnell.

**Motion:** David Zavednak moved, second by Richard Kendall that the nominees be accepted by acclamation. Motion passed.

**Open Position: One (1) Diocesan Auditor [non-voting]**

Nominated Candidate from the Nominations Committee: Irene Zavednak

**Motion:** Rdr. Steven Bradford moved, second by Ann Wilkinson that the nominees be accepted by acclamation. Motion passed.

**Open Positions: Two (2) Laity-at-Large Representatives to Diocesan Council**

Nominated Candidates from the Nominations Committee: Rdr. Timothy Tassmer, Irene Vassos and Mat. Cindy Voytovich.

Fr. John Hopko passed out a ballot and asked everyone to vote for two.

**XII. RESOLUTIONS** [Full text of resolution see Appendix I]

Fr. John Hopko led the discussion on the proposed By-Laws and reviewed the typos in order to receive the Resolution as presented. Everyone was in agreement on these typos and Fr. John read the proposed Resolution.

Motion was made by David Zavednak, second by Alexia Tassmer. Motion passed.

Copies of the Diocese of New England By-Laws, and Rules of Procedures are on file with Secretary.

**Results of the Elections:** The two new lay members of the Diocesan Council are Rdr. Timothy Tassmer and Irene Vassos.

**XIII. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Fr. John Kreta thanked Fr. Michael Korolev and the faithful of Ss. Peter & Paul Church, Springfield, MA for their tireless efforts to arrange and coordinate the 53<sup>rd</sup> Diocesan Assembly.

**XIV. INSTALLATION OF NEW COUNCIL**

Prayer Service for the blessing and installation of the new Diocesan Council was held presided by His Eminence, Apb. NIKON.

**XV. NEXT DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY**

2017 Diocesan Assembly: Northern Deanery – Northfield Falls, VT October 27-28  
2018 Diocesan Assembly: Connecticut Deanery – Hartford, CT October 26-27  
2019 Diocesan Assembly: Connecticut Deanery – Clinton, CT October 25-26

**XVI. ASSEMBLY ADJOURNMENT**

A motion to adjourn the assembly was made at 12:35 p.m. by David Zavednak. All in favor rose and sang, “It is Truly Meet.”

Respectfully submitted,

**The 2016 Diocesan Assembly Secretariat:**

Alexia Tassmer, Diocesan Secretary

Fr. David Koles

Fr. Joshua Mosher

**APPENDIX I**

RESOLUTIONS BY THE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE  
53<sup>rd</sup> NEW ENGLAND DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY  
October 29, 2016

**Resolution No.1**

Proposed Resolution Regarding By-Laws Revision of the Diocese of New England of the Orthodox Church in America:

A Resolution of the 2016 Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of New England of the Orthodox Church in America:

WHEREAS, the Orthodox Church in America has revised the OCA Statues at the 18<sup>th</sup> All American Council,

WHEREAS, Article XVIII of the OCA Statute mandates all Diocese, Parishes, Missions review their documents, and

WHEREAS, the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of New England established a Committee to review the existing by-laws and Identify changes necessary, and has distributed the proposed changes to Parishes 60 days prior to the Diocesan Assembly in accordance with the By-Laws presently in effect.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the 53<sup>rd</sup> Diocesan Assembly approves the proposed Diocese of New England By-Laws and the Diocese of New England Rules of Procedure as presented in the “Published Draft” and changes approved at the Assembly.