

Minutes of the 45th Assembly of the Diocese of New England Dormition of the Holy Virgin Church, Cumberland, RI – Oct. 24-25, 2008

The Assembly opened with a Service of Prayer celebrated by His Grace Bishop NIKON of Boston at 10:10 AM on Friday morning, October 24, 2008. All sessions on Friday took place at Marriott Downtown Providence hotel in Providence, RI.

I. ELECTION OF ASSEMBLY OFFICERS

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop NIKON, Fr. John Kreta, Chancellor of the Diocese of New England, chaired the election of Assembly Officers, as follows:

Clergy Vice Chair – Fr. Dennis Rhodes, nominated by the Diocesan Council.

Lay Vice Chair – Joan Skrobat, nominated by the Diocesan Council.

Secretariat – Fr. David Koles (the Diocesan Secretary) and George Ludko were nominated by the Diocesan Council. Fr. Joshua Mosher was nominated from the floor.

Credentials Committee – Timothy Tassmer and Alexia Tassmer, nominated by the Diocesan Council, Edmond Neil, nominated from the floor. Fr. John Kreta called for the vote of acceptance. Passed unanimously.

Nominations and Resolutions Committee – Fr. John Hopko and Greg Shesko, nominated by the Diocesan Council, Dn. Theodore Feldman, nominated from the floor. Fr. John Kreta called for the vote of acceptance. Passed unanimously.

Fr. John Kreta called for a voice vote for the slate. Passed unanimously.

Fr. Kreta welcomed the guests, Fr. Joseph Gallick of the Church of the Annunciation, Natick, MA, (Albanian Archdiocese) and Dean Triantifilou.

II. HIERARCH'S REPORT

His Grace, Bishop NIKON presented the following written report and talked about not looking to the past or dreaming about the future.

“What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul...?”

Let us rejoice, brothers and sisters, as we begin a new day, a new year, a renewed vision for our diocese.

Indeed for many months, even years we were on the verge of losing our vision, losing our perspectives, forgetting our responsibilities as Christ's Holy Church. Indeed, we were on the verge of losing our souls. The focus had been on sin, evil, our own and more often our minds were on the sins of others. We cannot allow ourselves to lose our souls.

Certainly the evil one rejoiced when some of the leaders of our church failed and fell into sin, but we cannot allow ourselves to rejoice in another's sins, for then we too lose our souls. As Orthodox Christians, when we see our brothers fall, it is not a time for rejoicing, but a time for action to rescue our fallen brothers armed with love, armed with truth, we are taught to help lead them back to Christ. We are called, always to be Christ controlled, not crowd controlled. For this is the way of salvation. Otherwise we lose our own souls.

I am speaking about the soul of our church, the soul of our diocese. By the Grace of God, in our diocese, we have kept ministering to the faithful, fed the sheep, encouraged the downhearted, and supported the activities and programs that lead to healing in our church.

Certainly there is much for which to be thankful and much to be learned from our experiences in building up the Body of Christ. Thanks be to God, Satan's attempts to divide us and divert our attention from our responsibilities to Christ's Holy Gospel was, for the most part, unsuccessful. We persevered through this past year, working to fulfill our responsibilities as Orthodox Christians. But it has not been easy for anyone.

Many of you may remember my communication to you following our last assembly. My innermost anguish and agony were shared by many as we left with heavy hearts. Three days following our Assembly, I was in Syosset, where I met with His Beatitude Herman and I conveyed to him that our Diocese believed that it would be best for him and our whole church if he exercised his privilege of retiring.

In addition, one week prior to the recent joint meeting of the HS and MC, I wrote a more personal letter to his Beatitude, by personal I mean, I wrote to him as a respected senior hierarch who taught me as I began my Episcopal ministry. In this letter I urged him to retire. I shared this letter with my two chancellors as well as a few of my brother Bishops on the Holy Synod. Later, at the recommendation of those brother bishops, I read that letter at a synod meeting. However, His Beatitude never responded to either my informal or formal requests that he retire.

Although I ruled a diocesan "resolution" insisting that the Metropolitan resign, "out of order", being fully aware of your concern for him and our church, I followed through with the desires expressed at our assembly by conveying our hearts and sentiments to His Beatitude. Not as a judgment, but as our sincere desire to help our church get back on track.

Reflecting the desire of many to affect meaningful change in the Central Administration, the proposal to withhold contributions to the central administration was revisited at our assembly in 2007, and after long discussion and deliberation, again it was defeated. At this time I reminded our assembly that the resolution of 2006 which I had initiated granting our Diocesan Council authority to withhold, following prescribed guidelines, was still in effect.

Unfortunately, one of the parishes in our diocesan family felt the need to independently withhold their financial stewardship. While their intention may have been to exert pressure on the Chancery, the unfortunate result of this action was that it compromised diocesan finances and more importantly was perceived as an action to separate themselves from the diocesan family. This action has caused much hurt and harm to me personally, and to our diocese at large.

My dear brothers and sisters, throughout the period in which funds were withheld; I approached the situation with love, care and pastoral sensitivity. I took measured steps to ensure that order was maintained in the parish and at no time was the liturgical life of the parish interrupted and the administrative work of the parish was allowed to continue.

When tempers flare, and when we take sides against one another nobody wins. When one parish, for any reason, believes that it has to act in isolation from the rest of the diocesan family, everyone is affected negatively. In this situation, a family quarrel has become public, and in some instances mean and hurtful things have been said in very public forums. This sad chapter in the life of our diocese has affected me personally, it has affected brother clergy, and it has affected many laypeople. Truly, when there is division in the family, when brothers fight with one another, the Devil rejoices. I pray that this kind of discord never again occurs in our diocesan family. I pray that our sister parish rejoins the work of the diocese. I pray that

public forums like the Internet and parish bulletins would always be used to build one another up for the work of the Gospel. But, most importantly, I pray that a spirit of Christian love and cooperation would be restored to the Diocese. This cannot happen when we put our own egos and agendas first. Christ must come first, for He alone is perfect and without sin. I am not perfect, our Diocese is not perfect, and none of the clergy or laity are perfect. We are weak, broken and sinful people, trying our best to do the work of Christ for our salvation and for the life of the world. The division and discord that we have experienced cannot continue, I will not allow it to continue, for there is so much work that must be done. So many are suffering. So many are lost. So many in New England are spiritually suffering and dying. There is so very much work to be done! And we cannot do it alone, and more importantly we cannot do it while separated from each other or divided.

Much good work has been accomplished since our last assembly, both on our own Diocesan level and the national level as well; a number of our clergy were recognized for their dedicated service to their communities and to the church at large. In our Diocese and in our parishes, programs proceeded with as much normalcy as possible as we took the time to look at the aspects that affect our diocese in terms of demographics, through the work of our Task Force, giving us valuable statistical information. Simply put, the ministry to our faithful was uninterrupted.

As we all know the Special Investigative Committee report was released and many of you have read it. As their committee has stated it is still a work in progress and there may be items to be clarified in the report. Some of those corrections have appeared in the preliminary minutes that have recently been posted. There is one aspect of this report that needs clarification;

I am referring to an incident that occurred in 2004, that included me, Archbishop Nathaniel and Archbishop Seraphim.....

The preliminary minutes stated that:

Bishop Nikon noted his strong displeasure with the section of the SIC report concerning a visit the he and Archbishops Seraphim and Nathaniel made to Moscow in 2004 at which time Archimandrite Zacchaeus informed them “of Kondratick’s attempt to misappropriate charitable funds.” The report says that the hierarchs did nothing in response; however, Bishop Nikon stated that the three did take action. Bishop Nikon also voiced his disappointment that he was not approached by the SIC to speak about the incident.

The facts are that immediately upon being informed by Archimandrite Zacchaeus of the attempt to misappropriate funds the three of us reported this to His Beatitude, fully expecting that he would address the issue in the appropriate manner since Robert Kondratick served the church under his omophorion.

The OCA Crisis

Although our national church has experienced this crisis over the past several years, some feel that this should not affect us because our diocese is functioning well; our parishes for the most part are functioning well. But, we know that whenever one part of the Body of Christ is injured, the whole Body of Christ suffers. This is true whether it is within our own diocese, national church or sister dioceses. Other Archdioceses in North America have suffered crises,

like the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and the Antiochian Archdiocese. We have all experienced crisis in our short 200 year history.

In my capacity as a member of the Holy Synod, it became a responsibility to address this crisis. Naturally, this was difficult since the problems leading to the crisis were multifaceted. It dealt with malfeasance, financial mismanagement and moral failings. And with the new technology the world not only watches, but individuals with limited knowledge of events had the opportunity to offer their opinions over the internet on several websites whether or not they were privy to truthful information. Another complicating factor was that we have proceeded at too slow a pace in bringing the malfeasance to light, and openly addressing the wrongdoing. Communication from the central administration was often slow in coming, if it came at all. In any crisis, the “fog of war” makes it difficult to discern what is true and what is false.

By the grace of God, the essential issues have been addressed and we are fortunate that we have had stellar representation from our diocese at the Metropolitan Council. The Holy Synod has addressed the issues set before them; the Special Commission, The Special Investigative Committee, the Legal Team and the Ethics Committee have addressed these issues and have come to an agreement on how to proceed.

AAC

Standing in the midst of this unprecedented situation, the whole church is gathering this November in Pittsburgh for the All-American Council. This council may be the most historic for our young church, as the issues that have plagued us will be addressed, a new Metropolitan will be elected and we will all dedicate ourselves to help whoever is elected to address the difficult tasks he will face.

Many of you know I am the chair of the Pre-Conciliar Commission for this Council and I initiated the Town Hall meetings throughout the US for our faithful at large to participate and offer their perceptions, perspectives and feelings. I was gratified that many of the faithful from our diocese participated in these Town Meetings in preparation of the AAC. Each parish is entitled to their pastor and one delegate to participate in the AAC and I look forward to all of our parishes being represented.

When some individuals and brother hierarchs became despondent over the crisis, I encouraged them by reminding them that there has never been a time in the life of the Church that there was not crisis. The Albanian Archdiocese has experienced four (4) crises that have deeply affected them and yet, this year they celebrated their centennial year.

We have been through much, many are still hurting, and many important decisions need to be made in order for us to continue fulfilling the Great Commission of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In the time we have together as a diocese, we have an opportunity to address our most pressing challenges. And we have serious challenges to face, and the work before us is not easy.

But I am not ready to give up on our responsibility to evangelize this land. I am not ready to give up on the Autocephaly granted to us as the OCA. Spreading the Good news of the Gospel is our responsibility, this is our charge, this is our responsibility, and this is our destiny. Though it may seem impossible, “with God all things are possible.” (Mat 19:26)

Youth

We had the greatest participation in years at youth rally, so many of our youth gathering together to learn about the Church and learn about each other.

I always enjoy my time with the youth attending rally. This year we had time to talk with the bishop, and exchange ideas and thoughts and it was gratifying as I arrived to be greeted by several of the sub-deacons in our diocese. I remarked to one of the pastors that his son was having a wonderful time at rally. Later he stated that I did not tell him how great a time he had because ever since he came home from rally he is on the phone with a young lady he met at rally. He is on the phone for hours when his father cannot get him to talk for just a few minutes.

In addition the college students as part of the OCF at UCONN continue to be very active and the group has grown this year to about 20 participants. I continue to visit with students on a regular basis and this is indicative of the dedication we can expect as they move to take on the responsibilities of parish life.

I wish to thank everyone who took the time to attend our special assembly in May so that we could proceed with the sale of our RI property. Unfortunately the committee could not get working until this past August.

In addition there were problems arising since we had a 2000 gallon oil tank buried under the driveway that had to be removed and later tested. Greg Shesko can give you a more detailed account as he was instrumental in taking care of a lot of the details necessary for the sale.

Highlights

One of the highlights this year was the centennial celebration of Dormition Parish in Cumberland and we are happy to close this most joyous event by holding our Annual Assembly in one of our oldest established parishes.

Recently we celebrated family day in the Connecticut Deanery and this was a most joyful event as we gathered together as family just to spend some time together.

Another joy to see is the inter parish cooperation between parishes of our Diocese and the Albanian Archdiocese. This is especially evident between Holy Annunciation Parish in Maynard, MA and Holy Annunciation in Natick, MA. This same is evident between the two cathedrals in Boston as servers and deacons from Holy Trinity Cathedral have participated in important events during this past year at St George Cathedral.

A Bio-Ethics seminar is being sponsored by St. Nicholas in Salem MA the first session was scheduled for Oct 5th and the second session will take place on November 5th

COLA

As you know our diocese has adopted a COLA obligation in reference to clergy compensation and Greg Shesko will bring us up to date as to the percentage requirement for the coming year.

We know it is a difficult year and a difficult time as the whole world wrestles with the financial crisis that affects all of us, but this does not exempt us from our fiscal responsibilities.

Communications

Communication between our parishes has become more regular with the publication of ONE Newspaper and I am most appreciative to the work and dedication of Fr. Halvorsen for taking on this responsibility.

It is absolutely necessary for our parishes to inform father of significant events in the life of our parishes, because they serve us not only as information but serve as inspiration and the exchange of ideas are beneficial to our respective ministries.

Fr. David Koles takes care of our website postings and he is most efficient and capable.

O-N-E Stewards

We are most grateful for all who participated in this year’s O-N-E Stewards program. With the new contribution level of the “Bishop’s Circle” we are nearing our goals for this Diocesan Program. I will be having dinner with the members of the Bishop’s Circle as a way to thank them for their participation. And no, I am not doing the cooking.

I mentioned earlier that there have been some pastoral changes and recognition of some of our clergy.

The Ordination of Nicholas Finley took place at Sts Cyril and Methodius in Terryville. The community was most joyful to have him attached to the parish and we are sad to see him leave as he has been transferred to the Diocese of the Mid-West and the omophorion of Abp. JOB.

There were several changes in the diaconal status that alters our voting clergy numbers on the diocesan level:

- Deacon Theodore Feldman – Holy Trinity Cathedral – from attached to Assigned
- Deacon Anthony Kruge – Three Saints, Ansonia – from attached to Assigned
- Deacon Jordan Vargas – Sts. Peter and Paul Mission, Bethel, CT - from attached to Assigned
- Deacon John Zarras – Christ the Savior, Southbury, CT - from attached to Assigned
- Deacon Wm Zachariah Wasuta - Holy Resurrection, Berlin, NH – from attached to Assigned
- Deacon Steven Hosking – Holy Annunciation, Maynard, MA - from attached to Assigned

In the Vineyard

Father Mark Vranes worked to aid those affected by hurricane Ike
Fr. Nicholas Timpko has recovered well and we are happy to see that he is visiting parishes to personally thank the faithful for their support and prayers

Synodal Awards....

As I mentioned earlier several of our clergy were recognized for their work in building up the Body of Christ by our Holy Synod some of these awards have already been bestowed and others await my visitation for the formal ceremony.

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| V. Rev. Robert Arida | Jeweled Cross |
| V. Rev. John Bacon | Palitza |
| V. Rev. Peter Carmichael | Palitza |
| Rev. Robert Dick | Gold Cross |
| Rev. John Eissman | Gold Cross |
| V. Rev. David Koles | Palitza |

V. Rev. Vasily Likwar	Synodal Gramota
V. Rev. Mark Sherman	Palitza
Rev. Vadim Pismeney	Gold Cross

Additional to the Bishop’s written report:

His Grace read an email from Nina Kosowsky, the parish warden of Three Saints Church, Ansonia, CT stating that they have voted to send in all funds to the diocese and request that the parish rector and lay representative be allowed to participate in the 2008 Diocesan Assembly and 15th All-American Council and that the parish council be blessed for installation. Their parish council had also affirmed that the parish must abide by the common decisions of the diocese. His Grace has written a response and read it to the Assembly, since it bears on the participation of Three Saints in the Assembly. He wrote that he was touched by this letter and that he does bless the installation of the parish council, he blesses the parish to send representatives to the Assembly and the All-American Council, and he commends them for their commitment to abide by diocesan decisions. He concluded his letter by saying he embraced the parish community and greeted Fr. Michael Roshak with the kiss of peace. His Grace replied that all would be allowed.

Credential’s Report presented by Timothy Tassmer: as of 11:25am

<u>Voting Attendees</u>		<u>Non-Voting Attendees</u>	
Hierarchs	1	Observers, Guests, Alternates	8 (6 observers, 2 guests.)
Clergy Delegates	26		
Diocesan Council	10		
Lay Delegates	<u>24</u>		
Subtotal	61	Subtotal	8
Grand Total Voting and Non-Voting		69	

III. PRESENTATION BY CONSTANTINE TRIANTAFILOU:

Dean Triantafilou, Executive Director of IOCC made a presentation on the works of the IOCC throughout the world. (A copy of the presentation is on file with the secretary)

Questions:

How to volunteer? Mr. Triantafilou said to use the new Volunteers section of the iocc.org website. It is still a work in progress, but the response has been overwhelming.

How does the IOCC transmit physical aid? Mr. Triantafilou said that they work with gifts in kind in cooperation with other charities. IOCC is now contributing about \$20 million by gifts in kind in emergency and non-emergency aid.

A short break was taken.

IV. 2007 ASSEMBLY MINUTES & 2008 SPECIAL ASSEMBLY MINUTES

Dn. Steven Hosking asked that his last name be spelled correctly.

A motion to accept the 2007 Diocesan Assembly Minutes, as corrected, was made by Marion Gulash, and seconded by John Barone. The motion carried.

A motion to accept the Special Diocesan Assembly Minutes from May 2008 as presented was made by Fr. Steven Voytovich, and seconded by Fr. Jason Vansuch. The motion carried.

Credential's Report presented by Timothy Tassmer: as of 12:05pm

<u>Voting Attendees</u>		<u>Non-Voting Attendees</u>	
Hierarchs	1	Observers, Guests, Alternates	8 (7 observers, 1 guest.)
Clergy Delegates	25		
Diocesan Council	10		
Lay Delegates	<u>24</u>		
Subtotal	60	Subtotal	8
Grand Total Voting and Non-Voting		68	

V. REPORTS

Fr. Dennis Rhodes, Clergy vice Chair, asked for brief comments from those presenting reports.

BOSTON DEANERY:

Fr. Robert Arida, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston and Dean of the Boston Deanery presented an oral report on the activities of the deanery. He highlighted liturgical concelebration, especially with Bishop NIKON and mentioned a number of special occasions, including the centennial of Cumberland, the 85th anniversary of Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church, Chelsea, MA coming up, and Fr. Robert Dick receiving a gold cross.

CT DEANERY:

Fr. Vladimir Aleandro, Christ the Savior, Southbury and Dean of the Connecticut Deanery presented a written report about the activities of the 17 parishes in the deanery. He especially noted the Deanery Family Day in which many gathered with our bishop for food and fellowship.

NORTHERN DEANERY:

Fr. Andrew Tregubov, Holy Resurrection, Claremont and Dean of the Northern Deanery presented an oral report. He mentioned that Fr. John Bernardi will become the priest-in-charge for Holy Resurrection, Berlin, NH and that the rectory is in dire need of repair.

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL:

Fr. Mark Sherman made additional comments to his written report about the last two years of his service on the Metropolitan Council. There have been two joint meetings with the Holy Synod that have been intense and productive. In Fr. Sherman's last term, in the '90s, the MC had acted as a rubber stamp to Kondratick, receiving reports that were hard to understand. According to the OCA Statute, the MC is meant to be a necessary check and balance. It had failed in that duty, but now has taken up an energetic and beneficial role. The MC has a legal committee, something new, which will allow it to function legally between meetings. The MC was instrumental in the establishment of the SIC, in ensuring that it would be free from interference from above. The MC has initiated legal action to try to recover funds from the Kondratick's. There is also a Financial Committee which functions like the Legal Committee except in a financial way.

Dn. John Zarras spoke on assessments and the budget. The MC has established a strategic planning committee to look at how the national, diocesan and local church is funded. It seems that two 'camps' or ways of looking at the assessments at the AAC. One is cut the assessment to \$50, DMW & DWPa. The DOW states a smaller reduction to no less than \$90 per capita. There are two budgets now posted on the OCA website for discussion and approval at the AAC. Dn. John will put forward a resolution that the DNE adopt the \$90 reduction. Within

the DNE at this time appx. 62% of the funds paid from each parish goes to the central administration and the balance stays in the diocese.

Fr. Michael Korolev asked why do we still have a head tax and not the biblical system of a percentage on the parish or diocesan budget. Dn. John stated that in a resolution passed by the DOW there is wording to move toward the biblical way of giving and that many have requested this be implemented. Fr. Mark Sherman said that he does not know what a pure percentage giving would do to the diocesan or central budget.

Greg Shesko said the diocese owes a debt of gratitude to Fr. Sherman and Dn. Zarras for serving in such difficult times.

They were asked to comment on the joint session of the MC/HS. Fr. Mark observed that the big difference was that the bishops sat mixed in with the council members instead of being segregated. This led to a freer discussion, a healthier dynamic and a new form of co-operation between both bodies.

How was the new General Council hired? There was a hiring committee established to review those applying. The committee was made up of attorneys from many walks of life who reviewed the firms applying for the position and then the person within the firm who would be the General Council.

Are there plans to collect data from the parishes as to the percentage that parishes are giving now? At this time there are no plans to collect this data at this time.

ONE / COMMUNICATIONS:

Fr. Sergius Halverson thanked Fr. David Koles for posting things quickly on the diocesan web page. He again exhorted as did past publishers, PLEASE send me things for if you don't we can not post or print in the paper. Fr. Robert Dick said that the DMW is now posting all things, newspaper, appeals, etc. online only. Are we planning to go in this direction? In the past we have looked at this but we still have many who are not connected and that these go to everyone who is on the mailing list.

ONE STEWARDS – Protodeacon Paul Nimchek reported that ONES was able to transfer \$17,200 to the diocesan budget. THANKS to all parishes that continues to support ONEStewards. Part of the reason for the increase was the “Bishop’s Circle.” His Grace starts the giving every year with a \$500 donation. Holy Trinity, New Britain was the parish that responded the most with \$3500 to ONE Stewards. Also, in memory of Anna Guba from Waterbury and extra \$1000 was given in lieu of flowers at her funeral.

SCHOLARSHIP:

Peter Kopcha stated that the scholarship is open to any male or female going to the seminaries. \$1500 full, \$500 part time, must apply every semester. \$9000 total was given out this past year

YOUTH & CAMPUS MINISTRY:

Fr. John Hopko gave an oral report along with his written report. He said the main youth ministry is the Youth Rally only. This past rally was one of the largest in a number of years with 45 kids and 15 staff. The schedule consisted of morning and evening prayer and Compline, as well as several liturgies. Mornings were devoted to religious development and the afternoon to fellowship: sports, boating, crafts, etc. The evenings had special activities. The bishop makes a visit each year. This year, the camp was opened to us in complete disarray and was filthy. It raised the question of whether we need to find a new home. We are charging those going to rally \$125 per child and \$200 per family. The actual cost per ‘rallyer’ is \$450. The cost for this rally is over \$20,000. For next year we need to raise the fee to at

least \$175 per child and \$300 per family. As in the past no one is ever refused. Youth Rally is one of the most important things we do.

A question was asked about campus ministry?

Fr. Hopko observed that Orthodox Christian Fellowships are active at certain colleges, but he has to acknowledge that he does not have the time to do anything more than to encourage local action, where this work really gets done. Fr. Jason Vansuch responded to comment on the blessings of the activity at UConn: "How many times do you meet your bishop for coffee and theology?" Andrew Boyd said we have a new OCF New England Representative. He pointed out more OCFs around New England and concurred that the focus should be local rather than trying to coordinate everything from the diocese. Frances Prestash commented on the blessing upon the parish of OCF involvement. Fr. Mosher asked that we be sure to convey this sort of news at each assembly.

COMMITTEE FOR EVANGELIZATION AND REVITALIZATION:

Fr. Sergius Halvorsen presented the report. There has been a 38% decline in membership and over the past 17 years the DNE has lost 1269 people. By 2020 we may be below 1000 members in the DNE. If all of our 27 parishes are still open the average parish membership would be around 37 people. Natural Church Development is a program that uses a survey to identify the strengths and weaknesses within each parish the NCD process seeks to identify the areas in which the parish community are the weakest. Once the 'minimum factor' is identified the parish community, along with the NCD coach, develops its own strategy to improve the weakest area of parish health. The process lasts about eighteen months, and begins and ends with a survey. With the blessing of Bishop NIKON, two parishes have begun the NCD process: Christ the Savior Church, Southbury CT; Nativity of the Virgin Mary, Waterbury CT. It is hoped that we can identify one or two more parishes to participate in this evaluation stage of NCD to determine its possible efficacy in the Diocese. Currently, Fr. Sergius Halvorsen is working with Fr. Joathan Ivanoff to become a fully certified NCD coach.

PENSION BOARD:

Greg Shesko started with some positive news that there will not be any interruption or reduction to checks for retirees. The pension board has an independent auditor and the last audit for 2007 stated that everything is in order and operating very well. For the bad news the market is down and even as we are meeting today the market is down. The pension plan started this year at \$27 mil and now is floating around \$20 mil. The funds are with Smith Barney and they are constantly checking on them. The pension board will be almost completely new for next year with all but one current member staying on the board.

COLA for 2009:

Greg Shesko presented the figures for the Cost of Living. The three figures used for calculating the COLA are Boston CPI at 6.3%, Northeast Region CPI at 5.7%, US city average at 5.6%. Therefore the COLA for clergy recommended by the Diocesan Assembly will be 6.3%.

CHOIR DIRECTIONG PROGRAM:

Fr. Steven Voytovich asked for questions on his written report. He stated that there are 4 participants at this time.

The session ended at 1:50 pm to break for Lunch.

Session II Began at 2:45pm

DEAN OF MISSIONS:

Fr. Mark Sherman spoke on the missions in our diocese and that there is a potential for a mission station on the mid-coast of Maine.

VI. TREASURER’S REPORT

Peter Kopcha, Diocesan Treasurer, presented the Treasurer’s Report

STATEMENT OF ASSETS:

Checkbook balance (8/31/2008): \$ 9,017.95

BUDGET REPORT:

Total Actual Income for 2007-2008 fiscal year ending 08/31/08:	\$343,335.81
Total Actual Expense	<u>\$366,245.38</u>
Total Actual Expenses over Income	\$(22,909.57)

A complete, detailed breakdown of the Treasurer’s Report was distributed to those in attendance and copies are on file with the Diocesan Secretary. Peter reviewed orally all the reports he distributed, explaining the facts and figures presented in the printed information. There are two overriding events in the diocesan finances for the past year: the withholding by Three Saints Church and the cost of repairs to the diocesan house. Without them, we would have been on target to meet the budget. As of today, almost every parish is caught up with assessments. We have no rental income. We received \$17,200 of the \$20 K budgeted for ONE Stewards. On the expense side: the last assembly had voted an additional stipend for Bishop Nikon but he had returned it. Bishop Nikon needed to be reimbursed for a \$651 increase in his long-term care insurance. Diocesan Administration expended \$2200 less than budgeted. ROLL was canceled by the Roman Catholic diocese hosting the radio program. There had been a question of where FOS funds had been going, so only had released \$1000 of the \$2000 budgeted to go to FOS. Mission Support was down because of some issues that needed to be clarified by the Director of Missions. The diocesan house costs proved to be very high: replacing the outdated boiler, removing a large underground oil tank and other necessary repairs before it could be sold. Overall, there was a \$21,000 shortfall in income and expenses were \$2000 over. We paid for this difference out of the checking account, but almost had to break into savings. The \$238,000 sale of the house today will help.

Joseph Boroush moved and Fr. Michael Korolev seconded the acceptance of the Treasurer’s report.

Credential’s Report presented by Alexia Tassmer: as of 3:00pm

<u>Voting Attendees</u>		<u>Non-Voting Attendees</u>	
Hierarchs	1	Observers, Guests, Alternates	5 (4 observers, 1 guests.)
Clergy Delegates	23		
Diocesan Council	10		
Lay Delegates	<u>23</u>		
Subtotal	57	Subtotal	5
Grand Total Voting and Non-Voting			62

VII. AUDITOR'S REPORT

Nicholas Bobrovsky presented the findings of the Auditing Committee. The committee found two outstanding bonds for \$500 each which have been around for a long time. A motion was made by Fr. Robert Arida, seconded by Fr. Robert Dick, that the Auditor's Report be accepted. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. SIC / AAC DISCUSSION:

His Grace led the discussion.

Bishop NIKON began by noting the plans of the Preconciliar Commission. He wants also to invite comment on these plans from the floor of the Diocesan Assembly.

There was a question on the agenda for the AAC. Bishop NIKON said that the agenda has changed. Bishop BENJAMIN, as chair of the SIC, asked not to hold multiple sessions on its report. But no more versions of the agenda will be sent out until the AAC.

Question: should we rehash at length the scandal, and when will the Metropolitan be elected? Bishop NIKON agreed that the discussion should not dominate the AAC, but there was a strong feeling in the PCC and the MC that the AAC must at least address the scandal. As it stands now, the election will be held on Wednesday. The current provision is that if on the first ballot two-thirds vote for one candidate, he is elected. Otherwise hold a second vote and the two top candidates are submitted to the Synod for them to choose between.

Fr. Robert Dick remarked that one benefit of the later time for the election is that it gives a chance to get to know possible candidates for the election.

Fr. Andrew Tregubov asked for a clear "job description" of the Metropolitan: what does it mean to be the primate of this autocephalous Church? He also commented that the Holy Synod as an elective body has had a dismal record in the OCA. There must be some reasonable method to make candidates known to the body of the AAC. Bishop NIKON made clear that the Metropolitan is meant to be the first among equals, but this has not been observed properly in recent years. He confessed that election procedures are in flux and he doesn't know exactly what will take place.

Question about independent audits of OCA institutions? Bishop NIKON said that they are underway. What about the dioceses? That is not mandated.

Fr. Mark Sherman asked if the PCC is endorsing the election procedure change resolution submitted to the AAC. Bishop NIKON stated that the PCC is not endorsing any of the resolutions.

Question: What is the "Administrative Summit"? Bishop NIKON said the Holy Synod is planning to meet for the enthronement of Bishop ALEJO and plan to hold an Administrative Summit.

Fr. Robert Arida observed that in America we experience a difference way of life for the Church from that experience in Constantinople in the 14th century or the 4th. It is time to reflect and reconsider our ecclesiology. We have to recognize that there are many different manifestations of ecclesiology. We must make the Eucharist our model of conciliarity.

Dn. John Zarras said that he hoped that the ACC will establish the long-range strategic planning committee to spend years carefully questioning these very issues and only after that should the OCA take action.

Fr. Andrew Tregubov asked about the precedence of electing a new metropolitan when this exploration has not taken place. Bishop Nikon noted that the PCC had asked not to hold the election so soon, but the Synod considered it necessary.

Fr. John Hopko criticized the focus on structure when people are the key. We need to spend more energy forming Christians so we have a better pool for future episcopal elections.

The session closed with prayer at 3:50 PM. The assembly participants broke into clergy and laity for their separate gatherings. Following all gathered to celebrated Vespers, followed by a dinner for the delegates at the Marriott Providence Downtown, Providence, RI.

***** Overnight Break *****

After the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Saturday morning, October 25, 2008, at Dormition of the Virgin Mary Church, Cumberland, RI, followed by a brunch in the parish social hall, the Diocesan Assembly reconvened for Session III in the hall at 11:35 AM with the singing of "O Heavenly King."

IX. OLD BUSINESS

Joan Skrobat, Lay vice Chair, opened Session III thanking all the faithful of Dormition of the Virgin Mary Church for all their hard work in making this Diocesan Assembly a success.

Credential's Report presented by Alexia Tassmer at 11:40 am

<u>Voting Attendees</u>		<u>Non-Voting Attendees</u>	
Hierarchs	1	Observers, Guests, Alternates	5 (5 observers, 0 guests)
Clergy Delegates	22		
Diocesan Council	9		
Lay Delegates	<u>22</u>		
Subtotal	54	Subtotal	5

Grand Total Voting and Non-Voting **59**

Diocesan Residence: Greg Shesko reported that as of today, Saturday, October 25, 2008 the house has sold.

X. 2009 DIOCESAN BUDGET AND ASSESSMENT

Peter Kopcha, Diocesan Treasurer, presented the complete budget and assessment package for the upcoming financial year. Peter commented especially on the changes and adjustments from last year's budget. Copies of the material distributed are on file with the Diocesan Secretary. As of this meeting there are 5 parishes that have not sent in the statistical information to the treasurer and the national church has not notified the diocese if the assessment will remain the same or rise. Therefore the "Fair Share" allocation is only a preliminary number until final statistics are received.

The Fair Share increases significantly: \$25,000. One reason is the loss of rental income. There is an overall 3% increase in income in the budget.

On expenses: The Bishop's stipend increases due to the COLA. The OCA has not been paying stipends so the budget adds back the supplemental stipend, which causes other benefits to increase. Travel expenses have increased. ROLL expenses have been eliminated. Youth Rally is now \$18,000 and the staff stipend is increased by \$300.

The budget increases the ONE Stewards disbursements by \$5300. Because we have sold the diocesan house, we have no new expenses. Unfortunately, in the new fiscal year we have already spent \$7000 to meet closing costs.

It is a balanced budget, 3% over last year. It does not presume any change in the OCA assessment since we cannot know what will happen at the AAC. The question is what to do if the assessment is reduced, and that is this Assembly's responsibility.

Fair Share: Three Saints reported membership decreased from 210 to 100 so all other parishes' shares will increase.

Fr. Dick asked that we compare actual current finances with the proposed budget.

Questions and comments –

Fr. Michael Westerberg suggested that we need to change the name of the line item “Bishops credit card” to “Bishops Travel” in order to protect the bishop. All agreed.

Question: What will be the effect of the sale of the house? Dn. Paul Nimchek observed that expenses for the sale of the house depleted the money market account entirely. He therefore suggested that we should use some of the proceeds to replenish that account. We could reflect this in the budget with an item of \$7000.

The question was raised about Three Saints dropping to 100. Nina Kosowsky said the parish council had followed Fr. Roshak's suggestion to make an appeal for a free-will offering and treat responses as the membership. The final result was 100.

Fr. Mark Sherman and Fr. Michael Korolev argued for a percentage of parish income as a more reasonable and fair way to assess parishes. Fr. John Hopko said that the current rule is to count communicant members not paying members. He also argued that it is not fair to those parishes with stewardship programs resulting in strong income. He said the Bishop is responsible to ask each priest how many communicants there are in the parish, and if the priest reports any number other than the truth, he is a liar and should be punished. A general discussion of the fairness of different measures of giving ensued.

Fr. Michael Westerberg moved to accept the budget, seconded by Fr. Robert Arida. During discussion on the motion Fr. Michael Westerberg called for parishes to be asked again on numbers of communicants. Dn. John Zarras concurred and said that the priest and no other must specifically affirm that the number is truthful. Fr. Mark Sherman observed that the AAC will most likely reduce assessments. What will happen then? It was agreed that as of now, it is up to the Diocesan Council to allocate any extra funds. Fr. Michael Westerberg withdrew his motion, to ease discussion.

Dn. John Zarras moved to increase the Bp. NIKON's stipend from the DNE to \$20,575.00 which is an increase of \$325 per month, second by Fr. Mark Sherman. Amendment to this motion by Prdn. Paul Nimchek, second by George Ludko, to remove the line item for the AAC of \$1000 and to increase the Fair Share income by \$2575, this would balance the budget. Amendment passed.

Prdn. Paul Nimchek moved to add a line item of \$7000 from the proceeds of the sale of the house, adjusting down the required Fair Share. Fr. Mark Sherman seconded. Greg Shesko pointed out that if \$210,000 from the proceeds were invested; it might earn \$10,000 and so replace the lost rental income. Peter Kopcha agreed that would be workable if no other project required the money. The motion passed in a voice vote.

Mr. Shesko then moved, David Rodgers seconded, that we invest \$200,000 from the sale of the house in Treasury Bills, for the sake of security, and that the interest from the bills be

dedicated to the budget, reducing the Fair Share \$10,000 for the coming year. In a voice vote the motion passed with one opposing.

Question: what will be done with the rest of the proceeds from the house? Mr. Kopcha said it would replenish the checking account.

Fr. Michael Westerberg moved to adopt the budget as amended, seconded by Greg Shesko. The motion passed unanimously in a voice vote.

Fr. Michael Westerberg moved, seconded by Fr. John Hopko, that the Diocesan Council be directed to ask every parish priest to supply accurate numbers of adult (18 years of age) communicants in the parish, to determine the true fair share. Fr. Mark Sherman asked what the OCA Statute on parish membership is. Fr. John Hopko read the relevant article. The motion passed unanimously in a voice vote.

Fr. Steven Voytovich then asked that His Grace send a letter to every parish explaining this expectation.

XI. **ELECTIONS TO THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL**

Nominations and Resolutions Committee presented the following ballot of candidates, as listed below:

Open Position: One (1) Clergy-at-Large Representative to Diocesan Council

Nominated Candidates from the Nominations Committee: Fr. Joshua Mosher, Fr. Dennis Rhodes.

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

Nominated Candidates from the Nominations Committee: Rosemary Delaney, John Barone, Irene Vassos.

Open Position: One (1) Clergy Representative to the Metropolitan Council [two year term to complete Fr. Mark Sherman]

Nominated candidate from the Nominations Committee: Fr. Robert Arida and Fr. David Koles.

Open Position: One (1) Lay Representative to the Metropolitan Council

Nominated candidate from the Nominations Committee: Dn. John Zarras.

George Ludko moved Fr. Dennis Rhodes seconded that the Secretary cast one ballot. Motion passed unanimously.

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

Nominated Candidate from the Nominations Committee: Thomas Eisenmann.

George Ludko moved Marion Gulash seconded that the Secretary cast one ballot. Motion passed unanimously.

XII. **ELECTION RESULTS**

After a short break the results of the elections were announced to the Assembly as follows:

Open Position: One (1) Clergy-at-Large Representative to Diocesan Council

Fr. Dennis Rhodes.

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

Rosemary Delaney, John Barone.

Open Position: One (1) Clergy Representative to the Metropolitan Council [two year term to complete that of Fr. Mark Sherman]

Fr. Robert Arida.

XIII. RESOLUTIONS

The Resolutions Committee presented two resolutions (see attached Appendix I)

The First Resolution proposed by Fr. Barnabas Fravel, (St. Nicholas Church, Pittsfield, MA) second by Fr. James Robertson.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Diocesan Assembly instruct the Diocesan Council to review the issue of clergy compensation and to prepare Draft Clergy Compensation Guidelines for the Diocese of New England to be presented for consideration at the Diocesan Assembly next year.

Fr. John Kreta stated that we do have national and DNE guidelines. Fr. John Hopko said that those are 20 years out of date and that we do not have access to them on the web or in print. DOS & DMW have more current guidelines. Motion passed unanimously.

The Second Resolution, proposed by Dn. Theodore Feldman, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston, MA, second by Fr. Robert Dick.

BE IT RESOLVED that reports to the Diocesan Assembly be limited to five (5) minutes, with the exemption of the Hierarch's report and any other report he designates. 20 for 19 opposed, motion is defeated because it did not reach the 2/3 majority.

A Resolution on the Annual Faire Share was presented by Dn. John Zarras, (see attached Appendix II) seconded by Greg Shesko. Dn. John said there are three parts to the resolution.

Part 1 mirrors the language of the resolution by the Diocese of the West.

Part 2 addresses the costs of drastically cutting the OCA budget.

Part 3 addresses the question of where the OCA wants to travel in coming years..

Motion passed with 1 no.

XIV. NEW BUSINESS

1) Fr. Steve Voytovich moved to thank Fr. Vasily Lickwar and the entire local committee for all their work in preparation and hosting the diocesan assembly. Peter Kopcha seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

2) Fr. David Koles read a statement from the Holy Resurrection Church, Berlin, NH presented by Fr. Andrew Tregubov, Dean of the Northern Deanery. The parish requested of the Diocesan Assembly a loan in order to make needed repairs to the rectory. Fr. Mark Sherman moved to loan Holy Resurrection Church, Berlin, NH \$10,000 for repairs to the rectory, Fr Michael Westerberg seconded.

Prdn. Paul Nimchek thinks that the excess from the reduction in Fair Share from the AAC should go to this parish. His Grace said that there are a number of parishes that need help to improve their facilities. Prdn. Paul noted that the charity portion of ONESTewards needs to increase magnanimously.

Fr. Michael Westerberg said the DNE has in that past given ‘grants’ to many parishes in times of need. His Grace stated that some dioceses do loan to parishes and others do not. He asks that the DC take up this issue as to what the parameters would be.

Fr Mark Sherman withdraws the motion hoping that the DC would take up this issue.

Fr James Robinson asks that the DC establish a Grant Committee to take up this issue.

It was thought that the interest from the monies received from the sale of the diocesan residence could be used for this purpose. Peter Kopcha stated that the interest from the \$200K, at this time, would approximately be \$200.

It was suggested that the DC could look into a ‘matching program’ to the funds Holy Resurrection parish could raise.

Dn. Theodore Feldman moved, Thomas Eisenmann second that the DC take up this issue and give up to \$10K if the DC thinks this is the appropriate action. Motion passed.

Summary of the Lay delegate meeting read by Irene Vassos.

In fervent prayer and through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we ask that this Assembly reaffirm the vision of the Orthodox Church to baptize all nations.

We beseech the Holy Synod and the new Metropolitan to actively lead and inspire us to strive for Orthodox unity in all North America that we may multiply and be transfigured into the Body of Christ as expressed in the liturgical life and work of each parish.

3) Fr Barnabas Fravel asked for an update on the relationship between Bp NIKON and Met METHODIOS of the GOA of Boston. His Grace said that Met. METHODIOS has acted on the basis that it is contrary to canons for there to be more than one bishop in a city. Bishop NIKON has observed that there are many such multiple sees in cities across North America. The See of Boston is of historical significance to the Diocese of New England and the Albanian Archdiocese. The matter had not been an issue in the early days of the bishops' relationship. It is an anomaly, yes, but it has not been an impediment in any other relationship. Clergy have asked Bishop NIKON not to back down. Instead, he will possibly appeal to the Patriarch of Constantinople. He is disappointed that our own Metropolitan had failed to defend the diocese at the last SCOPA meeting. Fr. Mark Sherman pointed out two adverse consequences to the breach. Beloved clergy cannot participate together. And when the daughter of a Greek family joined one of our missions, she was considered to be out of communion. Bishop Nikon was asked if Archbishop DEMETRIOS has asked Met. METHODIOS to stop. Yes, but Met. METHODIOS is not responsible to him. Fr James Robinson said that Abp. JOSEPH of the Bulgarian Archdiocese stated that Abp. DEMETRIUS has told Met. METHODIOS to ‘stop this nonsense’.

XV. NEXT DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

2009 Diocesan Assembly: Waterbury, CT.

2010 Diocesan Assembly: Northern Deanery (Springfield, VT / Claremont, NH)

2011 Diocesan Assembly: Ansonia, CT

2012

XVI. ASSEMBLY ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the assembly was made at 1:55pm by Marion Gulash, seconded by George Ludko. All in favor rose and sang, “It is Truly Meet.” With a benediction given by His Grace, Bishop NIKON, accompanied by prayerful best wishes for safe travel home on the part of all gathered for the Assembly, the proceedings came to a close.

Respectfully submitted,

The 2008 Diocesan Assembly Secretariat:

Fr. David Koles, Diocesan Secretary

Fr. Joshua Mosher

George Ludko

APPENDIX I

RESOLUTIONS BY THE RESOLUTION COMMITTEE

45th NEW ENGLAND DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY

October 25, 2008

Resolution No.1

Submitted by Fr. Barnabas Fravel St. Nicholas Church, Pittsfield, MA

BE IT RESOLVED that the Diocesan Assembly instruct the Diocesan Council to review the issue of clergy compensation and to prepare Draft Clergy Compensation Guidelines for the Diocese of New England to be presented for consideration at the Diocesan Assembly next year.

Resolution No.2

Submitted by Dn. Theodore Feldman Holy Trinity Cathedral, Boston, MA

BE IT RESOLVED that reports to the Diocesan Assembly be limited to five (5) minutes, with the exemption of the Hierarch's report and any other report he designates.

APPENDIX II

Resolution on Annual Fair Share

Submitted by Deacon John Zarras, Christ the Savior Church, Southbury, CT

- The diocesan assembly resolves to support the reduction of the annual fair share assessment of the central church from \$106 per annum to no less than \$90 per annum.

WHEREAS the Diocese of New England is painfully aware of the findings of the Special Investigative Committee that egregious and outrageous abuses have occurred over a prolonged period of time in the

management of the monetary offerings of the People of God by officers and employees of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), and;

WHEREAS these abuses have not only damaged the image of the Holy Church and scandalized the faithful, but have injured the life, growth, and welfare of many of our parish communities by draining essential resources, stifling parish programs, and inflicting unnecessary poverty and suffering upon the faithful clergy, and;

WHEREAS in spite of these abuses and misuses of Church resources there remain functions which can and properly ought to be performed by the central administration of the territorial Church, and;

WHEREAS the cessation of many of these programs threatens the gradual disintegration and weakening of the Autocephalous OCA and a resulting polarization which would be an evil potentially as great in its consequences as has been our recent over-centralization, and;

WHEREAS we are the Autocephalous self governing Church in America, not autocephalous dioceses, and we need the archpastoral leadership of the Metropolitan, assisted by his administration as an “icon of unity,” providing pastoring and stewardship to the dioceses and parishes as the Body of Christ, with clear goals, boundaries and utmost accountability, and;

WHEREAS the OCA is the most effective agent for executing some of its present programs for the good of the Church, and;

WHEREAS the defense of the Church from legal threats by those who were demonstrably responsible for their majority of the aforementioned abuses, requires for a time the expenditure of substantial sums of legal fees, and;

WHEREAS the Church has acquired a substantial indebtedness in making restitution for past misappropriation of funds;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the 2008 Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of New England endorses and supports the reduction of the annual fair share assessment from \$106 per annum to no less than \$90 per annum with the anticipation that by the end of the ensuing triennium there can be further profound reduction in the annual assessment.

BE IT ALSO RESOLVED that concurrent with our support of the previously stated level of support (Head Tax), we also support (over the next 3 years) a process that will study the effects of moving away from the Head Tax system to one of percentage giving at levels necessary to support the appropriate ministries residing in the dioceses and under the central church administration.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that our aforementioned support is contingent on the adoption by the AAC of the Long Term Recommendation 6) of the SIC report dated September 3, 2008 that reads as follows:

“The establishment at the 15th AAC of a long-term strategic planning committee to review: (a) the relationship of the dioceses to the Central Church; (b) the appropriate division of responsibilities and funding between the dioceses and the Central Church; (c) the separate and joint roles and responsibilities of the Holy Synod (HS) and Metropolitan Council (MC) in the governance of the Church; (d) the role, functions, structure, and funding of the Central Church Administration and its geographic location; and (e) the development, documentation, and implementation of sound business policies, procedures, processes, and practices. The committee will conduct a comprehensive review of *The Statute of the Orthodox Church in America* and all HS, MC, and Chancery policies to ensure accountability, openness, and communication to the Church-at-large. The committee will report to the HS and MC during their spring and fall sessions, beginning no later than the spring 2009 sessions and semi-annually thereafter.”