

Orthodox Church in America
20th All-American Council

Plenary Session IV
Thursday, July 21, 2022

The Session opened at 1:09 p.m. with the singing of “The Grace of the Holy Spirit.”

It was announced that the Minutes of Plenary Session III have been approved by the Holy Synod.

CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE REPORT

Registration at the Council:

Hierarchs:	13
Clergy Delegates:	277
Lay Delegates:	232
Total Voters:	522

Clergy Observers:	27
Lay Observers:	100
Single Day Observers:	16
Invited Guests:	4

Total Registration:	669
---------------------	-----

Present at this Session:

Hierarchs:	13
Clergy Delegates:	235
Lay Delegates:	212

Total Voters:	460
---------------	-----

Clergy Observers:	17
Lay Observers:	63

Total Present:	540
----------------	-----

METROPOLITAN'S REMARKS

His Beatitude, Tikhon, Archbishop of Washington, Metropolitan of All America and Canada, spoke in favor of the plan of His Grace Bishop Alexei to establish a fund for Alaskan clergy. He noted that if each parish of the OCA were to give \$100 per month for two years, it would establish a \$1 million fund, which would then be able to supplement clergy salaries by \$80 per month. His Beatitude personally pledged \$10,000 per year for the next ten years.

He also hoped all parishes would contribute toward the \$80,000 needed to build the St. Basil Academy in the Diocese of Mexico. He personally pledged \$10,000 per year for the next 10 years to this Diocese, the first three years to go toward St. Basil Academy.

STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SYNOD ON SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL IDENTITY

His Eminence, Archbishop Michael, Diocese of New York and New Jersey, Secretary of the Holy Synod, read the following statement on behalf of the Holy Synod:

There was a resolution proposed to affirm the Church's stance on issues of same-sex relationships and sexual identity. This matter, however, falls outside the competence of the All-American Council, since, in the words of the *Statute of the Orthodox Church in America*, "All matters involving doctrine, canonical order, morals, and liturgical practice" are within the competence and jurisdiction of the Holy Synod. Nevertheless, meeting under the presidency of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, the Holy Synod has issued the following statement:

The Orthodox Church teaches that the union between a man and a woman in marriage reflects the union between Christ and His Church (Eph. 5). As such, marriage is by this reflection monogamous and heterosexual. Within this marriage, sexual relations between a husband and wife are an expression of their love that has been blessed by God. Such is God's plan for male and female, created in his image and likeness, from the beginning, and such remains His plan for all time. Any other form of sexual expression is by its nature disordered, and cannot be blessed by the Church in any way, whether directly or indirectly.

That said, the Holy Synod of Bishops expresses its pastoral concern and paternal love for all who desire to come to Christ and who struggle with their passions, temptations, and besetting sins, whatever those might be. The Church is a hospital for the sick; our Lord has come as a physician to heal those who are ailing. Imitating our Savior, who stretched His arms wide on the Cross, we welcome with open arms all who desire the life of repentance in Christ.

Over the course of recent years, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon and the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America have made numerous pronouncements affirming the Orthodox Christian teaching on marriage and sexuality. Metropolitan Tikhon, at the 18th All-American Council in Atlanta, Georgia, on July 20, 2015, in his opening address, stated that:

“... the Orthodox Church must continue to proclaim what she has always taught: that marriage is the union between one man and one woman and the Orthodox Church in America can in no way deviate from this teaching...”

Among the Holy Synod’s affirmations of the same teaching are the “Synodal Affirmations on Marriage, Family, Sexuality, and the Sanctity of Life,” from the 10th All-American Council, Miami, Florida, taking place from July 26-31, 1992; the “Synodal Reaffirmation of the SCOBA statement titled ‘On the Moral Crisis in our Nation,’” issued May 17, 2004; and the synodal “Statement concerning the June 26 US Supreme Court decision,” issued June 28, 2015.

Therefore, in accord with the timeless plan of God our Creator, the unchanging teaching of Christ the Savior announced through His holy apostles and their successors, and the consistent witness of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, the Holy Synod affirms what the Scriptures clearly and plainly proclaim and the Holy Fathers unerringly confess, namely: that God made human beings in two sexes, male and female, in His own image, and that chaste and pure sexual relationships are reserved to one man and one woman in the bond of marriage.

As such, we affirm that sexual relationships are blessed only within the context of a marriage between one man and one woman. Motivated by love and out of sincere care for souls, we call those who suffer from the passion of same-sex attraction to a life of steadfast chastity and repentance, the same life of chastity and repentance to which all mankind is called in Christ.

We call upon all clergy, theologians, teachers, and lay persons within the Orthodox Church in America never to contradict these teachings by preaching or teaching against the Church’s clear moral position; by publishing books, magazines, and articles which do the same; or producing or publishing similar content online. We reject any attempt to create a theological framework which would normalize same-sex erotic relationships or distort humanity’s God-given sexual identity. The holy apostle Paul writes that such teachings will “increase to more ungodliness,” and that such a “message will spread like gangrene” (2 Tim 2:16-17), misleading the faithful and inquirers seeking the truth.

Any clergy, theologian, teacher, or lay person who contravenes our directive thus undermines the authority of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America by disregarding the Holy Synod's consistent and unwavering teaching on these matters. We call on any such persons to cease their disruptive activities, which threaten the peace and tranquility of the Orthodox Church in America, cause scandal and uncertainty, and tempt those who struggle against their disordered passions to stumble. Consequently, those who teach these errors become participants in the sin of those whom they have tempted or whom they have failed to correct, and thus should seek remission of this sin in the Mystery of Holy Confession. Those who refuse correction open themselves to ecclesiastical discipline.

Thus, we, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in Americas, conclude by once again affirming that all clergy, theologians, teachers, and lay persons of the Orthodox Church in America should teach nothing other than the fullness of the Orthodox Faith, which is the fullness of the saving truth.

We remind our faithful and clergy that every person of goodwill is welcome to visit our parishes. However, reception into the Church, and continued communion in Christ at the sacred Chalice, is reserved for those who strive to live a life of repentance and humility in light of these God-given truths, conforming themselves to the commandments of God as the only path of salvation in Christ. All of us are sinners, but it is for precisely this reason that our Lord Jesus Christ calls us to "Repent and believe in the Gospel, for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mk. 1:15).

ELECTIONS PROCEDURES

Priest Timothy Yates outlined elections procedures.

Delegates are to vote for up to four (4) clergy delegates and four (4) lay delegates for the Metropolitan Council.

Delegates are to vote for up to three (3) clergy delegates and three (3) lay delegates for the Pension Board.

When a ballot is complete, delegates are to fold it in half for collection.

Question: Priest Gabriel Bilas, St. Mary Magdalene Church, Fenton, MI: Is it possible to find out who the incumbents are? Answer: That information is on www.OCA.org.

Deacon Matthew Prentice, Metropolitan Council: Who is remaining on the Pension Board and not up for re-election? Priest Alessandro Margheritino responded that Archpriest Matthew Tate and Mary Ann Bobulsky are staying on.

Priest Jacob Van Sickle, Protection of the Virgin Mary Church, Merrillville, IN and Mrs. Maureen Jury, St. Seraphim of Sarov Cathedral, Dallas, TX: There are names of candidates that were on the website that are not on the ballot. Is there an explanation for this? Answer: Priest Jason Foster withdrew his name from consideration, and Mrs. Diane Dorogy was found to be ineligible, being registered as an observer and not a delegate.

Deacon Stefan Glomazić, St. Luke Church, McLean, VA: Is there a way to find out which nominations have been approved by the Metropolitan or the Synod? Answer: each has received the blessing of their diocesan hierarchy; there is no formal vetting process.

OCA DEPARTMENTS REPORT

Archpriest Thomas Soroka delivered the departments report (*see attached report and slides*)

Fr. Soroka began by delivering a brief history of the departments of the OCA (since the 1970s). He acknowledged the work of Archpriest John Matusiak (of blessed memory), David Drillock, Donna Karabin, and Mka. Valerie Zahirsky, among many other stalwarts.

He commented on the search for a Youth Director for the Youth Department. At the 19th AAC many financial pledges were made to fund a full time OCA youth director. A survey was done in 2019 and analyzed by the Holy Synod at the Fall meeting of 2021. The OCA is finally very close to hiring a national youth director.

Presently in production is a new adult catechism created by authors, teachers, and theologians from within the OCA. There will be a textbook, notebook, manual, and resource site. The goal is to have this project edited by theologians and approved by the Holy Synod by December 2022.

IOCC REPORT

Mr. Constantine Triantafilou, Executive Director and CEO of IOCC, spoke on the history and current initiatives of IOCC, marking 30 years of service. (*see slides and video*)

After his presentation, Mr. Triantafilou expressed his personal gratitude to Protopresbyter Leonid Kishkovsky of blessed memory for his many years of guidance and friendship.

RESOLUTIONS

Archpriest Timothy Sawchak presented two resolutions brought before the Council.

RESOLUTION 1

Whereas Alaska is the cradle of Orthodoxy in America: Be it resolved that the 20th AAC asks the Holy Synod of Bishops to designate annually the Sunday closest to the December feast of St. Herman, for a free-will collection from each parish in the Orthodox Church in America to support the Diocese of Alaska Clergy Endowment.

Priest Photios Avant, St. Sava Church, Plano, TX seconded.

DISCUSSION

Proponent: Archpriest Nikolay Miletkov, All Saints of North America Church, Albuquerque, NM: As Protopresbyter Alexander Schmemmann of blessed memory taught, “anyone capable of thanksgiving is capable of salvation and eternal joy.” This is about thanksgiving. Without Alaska we would not be here today.

The Clergy Vice-Chair called the question. The Resolution was carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION 2

The 20th All-American Council:

- *Expresses support for the statements by His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon and the Holy Synod condemning the aggression against Ukraine;*
- *Expresses support for His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kyiv and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church;*
- *Condemns the attacks upon parishes, monasteries, and temples whether by military action, seizure by other religious groups, or pressure and interference by civil authorities or occupying forces; and*
- *Remembers with love the visit of His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry to the 18th All-American Council in Atlanta.*

Archpriest Timothy Hojnicky, Holy Apostles Church, Mechanicsburg, PA, seconded.

DISCUSSION

Opponent: Mr. Joseph Pecevich, St. Mark of Ephesus Church, Kingston, MA: In speaking of the aggression against Ukraine, the resolution implies that there is a guilty party. However, there are multiple guilty parties.

Proponent: Archpriest David Garretson, SS. Peter and Paul Church, South River, NJ: This is a pastoral decision and resolution. The pronouncements of His Beatitude and the Synod to date on the Ukraine crisis have helped keep parishes together.

Proponent: Archpriest Yousuf Rassam, St. Innocent Church, Tarzana, CA: The terms aggression against Ukraine are intended to mean that this began with the Russian Federation attacking the country of Ukraine. We are not commenting politically, simply stating where this all began. Great deal of this concerns the beleaguered Ukrainian Orthodox Church with which we are still in communion. Most of the violence against churches are against Onuphry's parishes.

Neutral: Mr. Christopher Yanovich, Holy Resurrection Wilkes-Barre, PA: Language does seem like it's assigning guilt.

Proponent: Archpriest Volodymyr Zablotskyy, Holy Trinity Church, Yonkers, NY: This resolution is personal to me because I called my mother in March to wish her a happy birthday and she was hiding in a bomb shelter. The first three petitions of the Divine Liturgy begin with prayers for peace; we refer to peace 48 times in the Liturgy. I urge everyone to vote for this resolution.

Neutral: Priest David Gresham, Holy Apostles Church, Bloomington, IL: Read statement of Holy Synod on Ukraine so that we know the content of the statement referred to in the resolution.

Proponent: Archpriest Michael Meerson, Christ the Saviour Church, New York, NY: This is not a political resolution, but a Church resolution. The Church in Ukraine is squeezed between two sides (Constantinople and Moscow). We extend our hand of support.

Opponent: Deacon Stefan Glomazić, St. Luke Church, McLean, VA: The war is a tragedy on all sides. Any notion of blame distracts from the full appreciation of the tragedy that has been inflicted upon many people. The special prayers in our services are sufficient.

AMENDMENT

Mka. Sandee Buchman, St. John the Merciful Church, Kissimmee, FL: Unfortunately, innocents are being targeted in Ukraine. We need to stand up for innocents as well, who don't have a voice. We need to make the resolution broader. After "parishes, monasteries and temples," add "hospitals", i.e., "...condemns attacks upon innocent civilian populations, parishes, monasteries, temples, and hospitals."

Mr. Pecevich seconded the amendment and offered a point of order to suggest the word "all" before "attacks": "[The All-American Council] Condemns all attacks upon innocent civilian populations, parishes, monasteries, temples, and hospitals".

Point of Order: Fr. Garretson asks if the amendment can be disregarded, as all resolutions are vetted by the Holy Synod in advance. The Clergy Vice-Chair, after consulting with His Beatitude, responded that amendments are allowed

DISCUSSION ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Opponent: Priest John Kotalik, St. John the Baptist Church, Canonsburg, PA: The first paragraph already condemns all aggression against Ukraine. The second part of the resolution is all about religious freedom. This amendment confuses the flow of the resolution. Hopefully we can pass the resolution as originally submitted and approved by the Holy Synod.

Point of Order: Priest Nikolai Breckenridge, St. Nicholas Church, Bethlehem, PA: Was there a second?
Answer: yes.

Proponent: Mr. Pecevich: There is a supposition being made that all the aggression is against one Church and one group of people, but all sides are suffering; the amendment to the resolution should be broadened to reflect this.

Opponent: Fr. Breckenridge: Adding more groups to this statement actually increases the political nature of the resolution. We are focusing this on support for Metropolitan Onuphry, I believe it should remain as is.

Question: Mr. Artem Zinin, Nativity of the Holy Virgin Church, Menlo Park, CA: Is the resolution as the text appears going to be posted? Answer: It will be posted as part of official minutes and therefore will become a public statement.

The Clergy Vice-Chair called the question on the proposed amendment. The amendment failed.

The Clergy Vice-Chair called to question the proposed resolution. The resolution was carried nearly unanimously.

ST. VLADIMIR'S ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY REPORT

Archpriest Chad Hatfield, President, began with a video presentation. He added the following points to the Seminary's written report (*see report in handbook*). Fr. Hatfield announced that he received word that SVS received a million dollar Phase Two "Pathways for Tomorrow" grant from Lilly Endowment. The Seminary also received a \$36,300 Compelling Preaching Initiative grant from the Lilly Endowment.

The seminary leadership has come to understand a three part formation process: academic standards, pastoral training, and spiritual formation.

SVS is committed to being strongly residential while developing hybrid forms of learning to support the Church. The challenges of the 21st Century change day by day. SVS is looking to expand, which means a change of location.

Fr. Hatfield noted that the seminary has an 'overflow house' this year and that, for the first time, SVS Press has over \$1 million in net profit.

ST. TIKHON'S ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY REPORT

In addition to his written report, Archpriest John Parker, Dean, spoke of the saints who have walked the grounds of St. Tikhon's Monastery and Seminary. He noted that nine M.Div. degrees and one pastoral certificate were awarded in May of this year. Approximately 80% of graduates become ordained, and six of the ten of this year's graduating class are now priests serving in parishes. He further invited all attendees to view the "Father Fred Challenge" video on the seminary YouTube channel.

UPDATE ON JUDGE E.R. LANIER

Fr. Garretson updated the Council on the health of Judge Lanier, who is out of surgery and doing well. Fr. Garretson asked that all refrain from calling and emailing Judge Lanier until the Feast of the Dormition.

ELECTION RESULTS

Metropolitan Council

Clergy: 1. Archpriest Justin Patterson
 2. Archpriest Lawrence Margitich
 3. Archpriest Thomas Moore

Lay: 1. Lynnell Brunswig
 2. Elizabeth (Lisa) Mikhalevsky
 3. Alexis Liberovsky

Alternates: 1. Archpriest Christopher Foley
 2. Mka. Sarah Geana

Pension Board

Clergy: Archpriest John Dresko (6 years)
 Archpriest Chad Hatfield (3 years)
 Deacon Justin Griffing (alternate)

Lay: Melanie Ringa (6 years)
 Mka. Mary C. Buletza Breton (3 years)

The Clergy Vice-Chair announced that there was a tie for the position of Lay Alternate for the Pension Board. Therefore, a run-off election between Ivan Rudolph-Shabinsky and Paula Holoviak will be held at Plenary Session V.

HOUSEKEEPING

Dn. Peter Ilchuk noted various schedule matters. The meeting was adjourned at 3:36 p.m. with the singing of "It Is Truly Meet."